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THE VICTORIA FALLS FROM THE BRINK OF THE DEVIL'S CATAPACT



SOUTH AFRICA AFTER THE WAR

A NARRATIVE OF RECENT TRAVEL.

BY

L. I. KNIGHT

Author of 'Where Three Empires Meet' &c.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON

NEW YORK AND BOMBAY

1903

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PREFACE

As Special Correspondent of the *Morning Post* I left England in November last and travelled for eight months through the Cape Colony, the Transvaal, the Orange River Colony, and Rhodesia; my journey concluding with a visit to the Victoria Falls of the Zambesi. The main object of my mission was to describe the political condition of the Cape Colony, and the resettlement of the new colonies after the war, and to obtain on the spot as much information as I could as to the present attitude, sentiments, and aspirations of the Dutch population. I traversed some of the most disaffected parts of the Cape Colony, and then travelled in leisurely fashion, and in zigzag, through the Transvaal and Orange River Colonies, trekking with my Cape cart, or with the waggons of Boer transport riders, over the countryside, visiting remote districts, and living among the Boer farmers. I was thus, I think, in a position to form a truer idea as to the results of the work accomplished by our Repatriation, Land Settlement, and Educational Departments, in these countries, and to make myself better acquainted with the

opinions of the Dutch element (so misrepresented by Boer ex-Generals and other agitators) than is possible for those who collect their information on these questions in Capetown, Pretoria, and Bloemfontein. In South Africa it is to the countryside, far from the great towns, that one should go if one would ascertain the facts. This book is practically a reproduction of my articles which appeared from time to time in the *Morning Post*, the alterations being few. My thanks are due to the *Morning Post* for the kind permission I have received to republish those articles in book form.

E. F. K.

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SOUTH AFRICA AFTER THE WAR

CHAPTER I

FEELING AT THE CAPE—AIMS OF THE BOND POLICY OF THE PROGRESSIVE PARTY—RECONCILIATION AND BOYCOTTING—PERSECUTION OF DUTCH LOYALISTS THE CASE OF MR VLOK—CAPE TOWN OF TO-DAY.

AN optimistic Englishman who flatters himself that the Three Years' War and the magnanimous conditions of peace have settled the South African question, and that Briton and Boer will now work together in harmony to promote the country's good, is likely to have his spirits damped by a sad disillusionment if he lands in Cape-town at the present time and converses with the loyalists of all sorts and conditions. He will be told that, though all may be going well under our rule in the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal, the prospect is far from bright in the Cape Colony, and that it is here that we are likely to have much future trouble unless we are careful. He will find many Cape loyalists taking a more depressed view of the situation than they did in the darkest days of the war. They knew at that time that the British arms would prove victorious in the end, and they looked forward to a peace that would bring concord and prosperity to the long-disturbed land. But now they do not talk so hopefully, and maintain that a mistaken leniency to rebels, the surrender of the

reins of government to a Parliament that has for its master Great Britain's implacable enemy the Bond, and other errors of policy, have made the much-desired reconciliation more difficult than ever to bring about. They further maintain that all the blood and treasure may have been spent in vain, that we are throwing away the fruits of the long contest, and that the chief result of the war has been to shift the storm centre from Pretoria, which was the capital of a foreign State, to Capetown, the chief city of our old colony, the key of our South African possessions. When the British Government precipitated the peace it made careful arrangements for the settlement of the conquered Republics, but left our own rebellious colony to manage its own affairs. We neglected to set our own house in order: it is now perchance too late to interfere, and discord and confusion are the result.

This is a pessimistic view of the situation, but it is the view of the majority of the loyalists. The men of British blood in South Africa sincerely desire a complete reconciliation with the Dutch, whose sturdy virtues they cannot but admire, and are of opinion that the reconciliation would be gradually effected were it, not for the workings of the Bond and of the Dutch Reformed Church. The Bond has changed its title. Its leaders prate glibly of loyalty and of conciliation; they even vote for loyal measures in Parliament—on occasion. All this, in the opinion of most people in the Cape Colony, is intended for the benefit of the British public—soft-hearted and soft-headed folk in the estimation of the 'slim' Dutch politician—and that the trick is producing its effect is shown by the papers that arrive from home. But the Englishman of South Africa is not to be thus hoodwinked. He remembers

the history of the Bond, its plottings and its aims. He recognises the wolf under sheep's clothing. He sees that it is the same old Bond under whatever name it goes. Its leaders and members are the same men who intrigued for a generation against Great Britain. Is it possible that they have changed so completely in a day and have so suddenly come to love and esteem those they hated and despised? It is not natural for the leopard to change his spots. The professed object of the men of the Bond is to protect the interests of the Dutch farmers; but their undoubted aim is to obtain by constitutional means what the Boers failed to secure by war—the supremacy of the Dutch in South Africa. 'When weak, scheme,' is the Dutch saying, and it might be the motto of the Bond. It is possible that the Bond politicians entertain no hope of getting rid of the British flag, at any rate for the present. If they are allowed their own way they may even tolerate the British flag. But they are determined that the Dutch factor shall be predominant. By an organised system of boycotting they hope to drive the loyal British out of the country districts, and by every possible method to discourage or prevent the immigration of British farmers. If in power they would give every public appointment to an adherent. 'No English need apply' would be the word. Our flag, indeed, would be flying all over the colony, but it would be regarded by the inhabitants as a fluttering farce. Our influence would be confined to Simon's Town. Inland the country would be a territory British in name alone, the land of the Dutch Afrikaner, closed to British immigrants and British industry, from which Great Britain and the people of the Mother Country would get no profit; though with us would remain the responsibility of

protecting it with our battleships against possible invasion—a very one-sided arrangement when one comes to think of it. It would be a useless colony to us, but the Dutch would be happy. There would be no progress, and, of course, no federation with the other colonies unless they, too, were ready to become the creatures of the Bond.

To many this picture will appear overdrawn, but they may modify their opinions when they realise what is the nature of the Bond propaganda at the present moment in the country districts. There is now a tendency in Great Britain to take the smooth-speaking Bond at its word, to talk of peace when there is no peace, and to say nothing but nice things of our friends the recent rebels. This is all very generous, but we are dealing with a 'slim' race, and, unless the unpleasant facts are brought home to the British people, we are likely once again to become the dupes of those plausible Bond politicians who are now doing their utmost to bamboozle us into granting still further concessions to the disloyal, hoping to make British good-nature become unwittingly the destroyer of British supremacy in South Africa.

The decisive action between the Bond and the British colonists will be fought out at the next Cape election. The policy of the Progressive Party is to uphold the British factor in South Africa, and, to quote from a recent speech of a Progressive candidate, to promote 'a closer political, commercial, and sentimental union with the Mother Country.' The Bond is now agitating for a complete amnesty for the rebels and the expulsion of Lord Milner from South Africa. If our Government yields to either of these cool demands we shall disgust and estrange the loyalists in South Africa, and the

Bond will have accomplished its object. Were an amnesty granted to the now disfranchised rebels their votes would probably enable the Bond to obtain a good working majority at the next general election. The Progressives are calling for an immediate revision of the register, to be followed by the dissolution of both Houses and an appeal to the true opinion of the country by a general election. The Progressive leaders look forward hopefully to the result. It is estimated that the loyalists form a majority of the voters in the colony. But they are far from adequately represented at present, the populations of many of the towns having very largely increased of late. Should the Progressives come into power they will consequently pass a Redistribution Bill which will give a larger representation to the cities and so strengthen the Loyalist Party in Parliament. It is of vital importance to the cause of the Bond that it should secure a majority at the coming election. No effort will be spared in the strenuous struggle, every 'slim' trick will be employed. It is, indeed, scarcely too much to say that the whole future of South Africa depends on the result of the impending contest.

People at home who are under the impression that all convicted rebels have been disfranchised for five years will, I think, be astonished to hear that many of these men voted at the recent by-elections. Rebels who were expressly disfranchised by the Treason Courts contrived to record their votes at Colesberg. Those who were found guilty of treason by the military courts and suffered fine or imprisonment openly voted in still larger numbers, none of their names having so far been scratched off the register. In cases where rebels were still imprisoned their friends impersonated them at the

polls and voted in their name. According to some of our lawyers, rebels who have been condemned by the military tribunals cannot be disfranchised, as they have paid the penalty once, and it is illegal to punish a man twice for the same offence. At the time of the conviction everyone understood that the sentences carried disfranchisement with them. The other view may be sound law but it is not common-sense, for many of the worst offenders were those who were tried by military law, and it is now argued that these are entitled to vote while the lesser offenders are disfranchised. In the Cape Colony so many of the civil servants and those who administer justice are in sympathy with the rebels that no legal quibble that can favour them has been overlooked. The Progressive agents will find it no easy task to clear the new register from the rebel element. It cannot, of course, be thoroughly expurgated, for many undoubted rebels have been acquitted through the negligence of those responsible for getting up the cases against them, while many others have not yet undergone their trial; and now that the fear of martial law has been removed it will be exceedingly difficult to collect evidence against them.

It is useless to cry over spilt milk, but now the few loyalists in South Africa who were of opinion that the suspension of the Constitution was unnecessary have, for the most part, come to regret bitterly that the step so earnestly advocated by Cecil Rhodes on his death-bed was not adopted. Things would be going better now had the Constitution been suspended long enough to allow of the Imperial Government carrying through the trial of the rebels instead of leaving its half-completed work to the semi-rebel Government of the Cape. If the Constitution had not been restored until the

revision of the register and the redistribution had been effected, a great danger would have been avoided, and the much-talked-of reconciliation would have been nearer. We have handed over the guidance of the colony at this critical period to a Parliament largely composed of members who owe their seats to the votes of now disfranchised rebels, and the Cape Government, though it is no longer representative, has no intention, apparently, of going out of office until compelled to do so.

The position is indeed a strange one. Even as in the days of Mr. Rhodes and Mr. Kruger, two master minds are opposed to each other in South Africa. On the one side is Lord Milner, beloved and implicitly trusted by all the really loyal men in the country. On the other side is the subtle Mr. Hofmeyr, who outwardly takes no part in politics, who is not even in Parliament, but who rules the Bond, which rules the Parliament and the colony. The Progressives were dismayed and disorganised by the death of Mr. Rhodes and by what they naturally consider to be the defection of the Prime Minister, Sir Gordon Sprigg. The Progressives have no strong man as leader; they are to some extent divided among themselves, and the party lacks the discipline and wonderful organisation of the Bond.¹ The member of the Bond is like the Jesuit. He is the slave of his society; he has no independence. If his chiefs deem it impolitic that he should express his true feelings, he has to employ in Parliament only the smooth words that are dictated to him. Frequently during the past year when some hot-headed young

¹ Since this was written the leadership of the party has been offered to, and been accepted by, Dr. Jameson, who is a strong man and the right man for the position.

Dutch member leapt to his feet to reply angrily to a cutting utterance from the Progressive benches he was brought back to his seat by a twitch at his coat-tail, and held his tongue, implicitly obedient. On the other hand, a Progressive member would occasionally in his natural indignation speak his mind somewhat injudiciously, thus playing into the hands both of the Anti-British sentimentalist at home and of the men of the Bond, who would say to you : ' We, you will observe, are men of peace ; we talk gently, we want to bury the hatchet ! The shocking violence of language is all on the Progressive side. Ours is the party of reconciliation, your Jingoës are the true irreconcilables.' There are signs to show that the Bond gave the word to its supporters to lie low and to express none but the most conciliatory and moderate sentiments while Mr. Chamberlain was in the country.

But the reconciliation seems to be all on our side. Where is the reciprocity ? Great Britain gets no credit for her magnanimity and is despised for it. Friends of the Bond in Capetown assured me that the stories of the boycotting of loyalists in the country districts had been much exaggerated ; that there was, of course, some bitterness after the recent war ; that this would in time die out ; and that at any rate the Bond was not responsible for the boycotting. Since then I have visited districts where the Dutch form the large majority of the population. I found that boycotting was gradually getting worse, and that farmers who were lately friendly to their loyalist neighbours had been compelled by the tyranny of the system to join, against their will, in the persecution of the unfortunate victims.

The Bond exercises an absolute authority over the Cape Dutch farmers. These ignorant people obey its

behests without question. If, therefore, the Bond disapproved of the boycotting it could put a stop to it at once by passing round the word. That it does not do so shows that its professions of reconciliation are not sincere. As a matter of fact, there is little doubt that the Bond is responsible for the boycotting, by which it hopes to starve the staunch British loyalists out of the country and to win over the weak-backed ones by proving to them that it does not pay to be loyal to Great Britain. The Dutch Reformed Church, again, displays the reverse of a conciliatory spirit. The preachers tell the simple people that they, indeed, were the victors in the war; that the Boers made peace for humanity's sake, not of necessity; that the very generosity of the British proves this, for what conqueror would offer to pay three million pounds to the conquered, or fail to make an attempt at enforcing those many proclamations concerning banishments and the confiscations of farms which are ridiculed by all the Dutch in the country? The Boer respects firmness and justice, but despises shilly-shallying. In dealing with him we should have made no threats that we did not intend to execute. So the credulous people, listening to their pastors, are in some districts as arrogant and as insulting to their British neighbours as they were before the war. An Englishman travelling among them might well imagine himself to be one of the beaten, not of the victorious side. Outside the large towns the control of the State education is practically in the hands of the Dutch Reformed Church, and the most disloyal text-books have been in use in the State-aided schools of this British colony. A rigorous control of State education that will ensure the loyalty of all teachers and a proper curriculum in the schools would

do more than anything else to bring about the reconciliation—a word, by the way, which has such unhappy associations that it sickens most loyalists in South Africa to hear it uttered.

While the Bond statesmen in Capetown talk prettily about conciliation, their constituents steadily carry on the persecution of the loyalists, and succeed, as I shall show later, in effecting the utter ruin of many an innocent family. Of acts of violence one hears little. The peace-preaching Bond is too ‘slim’ to encourage violence. The astute lawyers, of whom there are so many in the ranks of the Bond, deprecate any illegality : attain your end by exclusive dealing, injustice that does not go beyond the line of chicanery, but let your doings be in form righteous, and never lose your respect for the sacred letter of the law.

It is naturally the Dutch loyalists, those whose sympathies are with us and especially those who fought on our side, who are enduring the most harassing persecution of all. Their lot is pitiable in the extreme. A notorious case is that of Mr. Vlok, the clergyman at Piquetberg, who, because he preached against rebellion from the pulpit and joined the Town Guard when the invading Boer commandoes threatened the town, was expelled from his church by his flock and condemned by the assembled elders of the Dutch Reformed Church. The true sentiments of that fanatical Church were thus revealed, for no one has yet heard of any of the Dutch pastors who fought on the Boer side having been even reprimanded for their unclerical, if sportsmanlike, behaviour. I have seen a letter written by a Dutch lady to an English friend, whose house she was taking care of during the owner's absence, watering the flowers in the garden and so forth. As the result of this small act

of kindness her kin and all her Dutch friends have cut her, and her life is being made so unbearable that she is thinking of selling her home and removing to another part of the country. The loyal Dutch are suffering everywhere, and it is to the relief of the poorer of those who were faithful to us that the attention of the charitable at home might well be directed. The British loyalists in the Cape Colony are subscribing generously to a fund that is being raised for this object.

As for the British loyalists who have fought for us, who have made great sacrifices for the flag, and who supplied our columns freely during the war with the stock and produce of their farms, it should be realised at home that many of these, the wealthier, are too proud to send in claims for compensation. They expected no return for their services, and, so far as I can gather, they have received little recognition for their patriotic attitude. There is no doubt that the poorer loyalists are sadly in need of assistance, and the boycotting in the Cape Colony has rendered destitute families once well to do.

In a single copy of one of the Capetown papers I read three separate paragraphs that set one thinking. According to one paragraph the Quakers in South Africa had represented to their brethren at home that twenty-five millions sterling would be needed to reinstate on their farms the Boer victims of the war. The second paragraph stated that £25,000 had been subscribed by British subjects towards the Boer generals' fund for the relief of distressed Boers. From the third paragraph I learnt that up to the date of these announcements the modest sum of £8,000 only had been collected in Great Britain for the distressed loyalists. Perhaps by this time the people at home are realising

that their first duty is towards those who were on our side in the war. Let the Quakers and other infatuated lovers of peace at home bear in mind that any money that they may hand over to Dutch Committees is likely to be spent in a way that will conduce rather to a perpetuation of strife than to reconciliation. The Dutchman pampered by British generosity now expects us to provide fully for those of his people who are suffering from the consequences of the war he provoked, while any funds he can collect will probably be devoted to the advancement of his great scheme for assisting the British out of the country.

Capetown itself to-day seems a weird city to one who knew it in earlier days, a city like none other in the British Empire, lying under the shadow of the Bond, with a moral atmosphere strangely oppressive. In some curious way it reminds one of a city that has endured a long siege and is still under military occupation, where all is yet disorganised, where bitter feelings rankle, even though they be not often openly expressed. Imperial officers in uniform, to my knowledge, now that martial law has been suspended, are not infrequently insulted in the streets, and some time since an order was issued from the Castle the purport of which was to enjoin officers to be circumspect in their relations with civilians and repress their natural resentment under affront. In Capetown one realises perhaps more vividly than one does elsewhere in South Africa that the recent struggle was a civil war in a truer sense than any other in modern times, more so than the great conflict in the United States; for there, though there had been considerable intermarriage between the Northerners and Southerners, the line of demarcation between the two populations was clearly marked. Here nearly every

township and countryside was divided against itself; members of the same family fighting on different sides all the colony over. In the clubs British and Dutch now meet again with a fair show of cordiality, and I have dined in houses where all the guests save myself were relatives of the host, some of them staunch loyalists, others rebels, at least in sympathy. They were all the best of friends, but of course politics was a tabooed subject of conversation. But, on the other hand, in many families there is distrust and bitterness, and sometimes hopeless severance. I know cases where the Dutch wife has had to choose between her husband and her own people, and has become estranged from her kin because she took the right course.

In many ways the once quiet old town has strangely changed. It is now crowded with the scum of the European cities, and on any morning one can see outside the rough shed which is used as the permit office a long tail of the most undesirable-looking people, mostly foreigners, awaiting their turn to receive the passports which enable them to travel to Johannesburg. Apparently permits are refused in very few cases, and it does not astonish one to hear that the City of the Golden Reef now contains one of the vilest populations on the face of the earth.

South Africa is proverbially a country in which it is difficult to arrive at the truth. The average Afrikaner appears to be incapable of conveying the simplest piece of information without indulging in exaggeration or misstatement. To put it euphemistically, inaccuracy is in the air here. I defy anyone, as long as he remains in Capetown, to come to any conclusion as to the condition of affairs in the colony. The partisans on either side are reckless in their argument, and their state-

ments as to matters of fact are often flatly contradictory. From loyalists one hears stories of such cruel boycotting that they would make one's blood boil if one knew them to be true. On the other hand, the friends of the Bond plead their case speciously, assuring one that the loyalists have no just grievance, and have been favoured in the compensation awards and in other matters ; while, as for persecution, that it is the brutal British Jingoës who are bullying the poor simple Dutchman.

With such a conflict of evidence before one it is not easy to get at the truth. There is one method of arriving at an opinion, if not at the truth, much in vogue with those who come to South Africa in search of information. This is to land with a preconceived idea, interview only those whose views fit in with your own, accept all their reports, and stick to them through thick and thin in the face of all disproof. For example, I understand that a few English sentimentalists and an emissary of the Bond once met by appointment at a certain hotel in Switzerland, discussed the question of the concentration camp 'atrocities,' and had their opinion cut and dried before they started for South Africa, where you can easily get any amount of evidence to support any sort of theory you may have evolved. On the other hand, the earnest seeker for the truth, going to and fro among so many equally plausible, wholly disagreeing, informants, is apt to become even as a confused chameleon, changing the colour of his opinion at each convincing interview.

I heard a great deal in Capetown, and I conversed with people of every shade of opinion, but I acquired little certain information, though I discovered what were the more important matters that needed elucidation.

tion, and this after all was a good deal gained. Capetown may be the centre of disaffection in South Africa, but it is not in this city, with the world's eyes on it, that the Bond dares play its game openly and show its hand. It is obviously to the countryside, far from the great towns, that one should go if one would ascertain the facts. In the more disaffected parts of the colony one can find out for oneself on the spot what is the attitude of the Dutch farmers, what the missionaries of the Bond are doing, and whether or not the loyalists have real grievances. It was therefore to the back country that I decided to go. As my friends, though differing widely on other matters, all agreed that it would be difficult to find in the colony or in the entire British Empire a population that had proved itself so thoroughly disloyal as that of the region hard by the Orange River border, comprising the towns of Philipstown, Colesberg, Middelburg, Burghersdorp, and Aliwal North, it was to these districts that I first proceeded. Having provided myself with letters of introduction to many local people, including the representatives of the Bond, I travelled in leisurely fashion through the country which supplied so many rebel recruits to the Boer commandos during the two invasions of the Cape Colony, in some districts 90 per cent. of the voters joining the enemy. I thus learnt more concerning the situation and feeling of the people than I could have done in Capetown in six months.

CHAPTER II

INSTANCES OF BOYCOTTING—JOURNEY TO COLESBERG—COLESBERG AFTER THE WAR—ATTITUDE OF THE CAPE DUTCH—ORGANISATION OF THE BOYCOTT—BOND ELECTION MANŒUVRES—VOTING OF REBELS—THE COMING GENERAL ELECTION—DISCONTENT OF LOYALISTS—COMPENSATION OF REBELS—METHODS OF THE COMPENSATION COMMISSIONS.

BEFORE leaving Capetown I wandered through the lovely scenery of the Cape Peninsula, then glowing with a wonderful profusion of beautiful wild flowers—a veritable Paradise from the mountain tops down to the white sands on which break the great rollers of the South Atlantic, a rich land over which are scattered pleasant Dutch farmhouses, orchards, and vineyards, and where only a few deserted blockhouses here and there recall to one's mind the recent war. But amid these peaceful landscapes, as I discovered on revisiting some of my old friends, British and Dutch, on their farms, much treason simmered, while bitter disappointment and resentment rankled in the souls of a large section of the loyalists here as elsewhere in this unhappy colony.

In Capetown itself the boycotting of loyalists was apparently not being carried on to any serious extent, though the 'exclusive dealing' conspiracy was gradually making way there, and merchants whose sons fought on our side were losing their Dutch business. But one had not to go far outside the city in any direction to find the oppressive system in force. As an

example, I will give an account of some of the cases of boycotting, fully verified, which occurred in the Malmesbury district, within fifty miles of Capetown, one of the richest corn and wine producing districts in the colony. From all sources comes the same story. In the two conquered Republics the Boers who fought bravely against us are far less bitter and are more ready to be friendly with their British neighbours than are the Cape Dutchmen, who, especially those who dwell in districts which the war never reached, are for the most part rebels at heart, and, though they had not the courage to take up arms against us, now employ the boycott—the mean weapon of the cowardly.

The solitary two loyal Dutchmen in one village of the Malmesbury district who had joined the Town Guard were absolutely boycotted. No Dutchman would buy from them or sell to them; they were treated with the greatest indignity; men kicked them and women spat at them whenever they showed themselves in the street. The persistent persecution compelled them in the end to leave the district. In another place a Dutch doctor was boycotted because he had joined a volunteer medical corps and tended the British wounded during the war. His practice has fallen in value from £1,200 to £300 per annum, all his Dutch patients deserting him. Another doctor had started practice in a village at the invitation of a committee of farmers who guaranteed him an income of £300 a year, and, as he was a poor man, they furnished a house for him. He, too, offered his services as surgeon to the British during the war, with the result that the farmers have withdrawn their guarantee, and by complicity with the vendor of the furniture, who maintained that he had not yet received payment for it, they had it

seized and sold. His income has dwindled to £40 a year, and he and his family are in a half-starving condition.

Neither are the women spared. A Dutchman, for example, in this district who had served the British in some capacity, found on his return that his wife, while ill, had been turned out of her lodgings into the street and no Dutch people would take her in. Still further west the loyal farmers, especially if they be Dutch, are being severely boycotted. Stock speculators will not deal with them. When loyalists are trekking, the disloyal farmers refuse to allow them to water their cattle unless they pay exorbitant blackmail, and in some cases their forage has been burned by their malignant neighbours.

On the night of December 10 I left Capetown for Colesberg, which is six hundred miles distant, the railway journey occupying two nights and a day. Throughout the 11th the train traversed the dreary wastes of the Karroo, with its Soudan-like landscapes, and when we had passed Beaufort West and were crossing the regions where so much fighting was done during the Boer invasions and the guerilla raids the signs of the prolonged conflict became visible on every side. At frequent intervals one saw, perched on rocky eminences, the often picturesque little blockhouses, of varied architecture, linked one with the other by innumerable sangars and earthworks and hundreds of miles of barbed wire. Here and there, too, by the side of the line were the little graves topped by wooden crosses, where the British soldiers lie who died the soldier's death. From Colesberg Junction a short branch line takes one to within a mile of the town.

Colesberg, which is about fifteen miles from the

Orange River, is a little town containing less than two thousand inhabitants, the large majority of whom are Dutch, and were rebels almost to a man, woman, and child during hostilities. Lying as it does in a stony hollow closely hemmed in on all sides by steep rocky kopjes, it is one of the hottest places in the colony. It is a clean-looking little place, and, as there is a good water supply, the streets are lined with shady trees after the Dutch fashion, and very grateful to the eye are the masses of green foliage as one comes in from the burnt-up veldt. Colesberg is one of the birthplaces of Paul Kruger—for other townships also claim him—and here the people show you the house in which he was born. As a matter of fact, there was no town here at the time of his birth, but he was probably born somewhere in this district while his family were trekking. It is a typical township of the veldt, with a few hotels and stores, a Dutch and an English church, while outside is the ragged native village. Colesberg is in the centre of a rich cattle and sheep farming country, and this is perhaps the greatest horse-breeding district in the colony. The waggon road to the Orange River Colony passes through the town, and crosses the river by a fine bridge, the construction of which cost the colony £100,000. It was blown up during the war, and waggons have now to cross the stream by the Bethulie Bridge.

Colesberg, like other Dutch townships, is fast asleep in the afternoon, the entire population taking the siesta; the doors and shutters are closed, and the place looks like a city of the dead. But it was morning when I drove in, and the town presented quite a lively appearance, for there was to be a great sale of cattle. Under the glaring sunshine the ox-waggons, with their long teams, slowly passed through the dusty streets; lowing

cattle were being driven in for sale ; mounted farmers rode in in numbers ; and a solemn black boy, who holds the post of town crier, was going to and fro, ringing his bell and exhibiting a placard which announced in Dutch and English that an important general auction was being held in the main street. I attended the auction later on. A motley collection of second-hand furniture, crockery and other household goods, saddlery, and agricultural implements were being put up for sale, and the crowd around that bid and bought was chiefly composed, as I discovered afterwards, of ex-rebels who had taken up arms against us, some of them having just completed their term of imprisonment.

It will be remembered that this neighbourhood was the scene of repeated fighting during the war, and Colesberg is surrounded by grave-strewn battlefields and the monuments raised to our dead. The Colesberg operations are very clearly explained in Sir A. Conan Doyle's book. Colesberg was for many months occupied by the Boer invaders from the Free State, and I may mention that they behaved extremely well, respecting the property of the British and paying in gold for everything they took, even on the last day of their occupation, when they were retiring before the British general advance. The people who behaved badly were not the invaders, but the Dutch townspeople, our own fellow-subjects. It is they who looted the houses of some of the wealthier British, and it is shrewdly suspected that a general domiciliary visit would result in the discovery of much of the furniture and household treasures of the loyalists in the dwellings of their neighbours. It was the Colesberg people, too, not the invaders, who grossly insulted and gloated over the few British who remained in the town. British inhabitants

have told me how the Dutch women would stop them in the streets to tell them that the gutters would soon be running red with British blood, and how they clapped their hands and laughed with joy when the wounded and dying soldiers were being carried in by the Boers.

Bitter bread had the British to eat then, and lo ! it is not much better now. The rebels swagger about as if they were the conquerors ! Those who were on commando are the petted heroes of the town. Some of these rebels, instead of having suffered punishment, have, under the new Gilbertian topsy-turvy way of treating treason, apparently come out of it rather better off than they were before the war. The ignorant Dutch farmers seriously believe that we were beaten by the Boers, and that the repatriation and compensation funds represent the indemnity that we are paying to the victors. The illiterate farmer in the colony, it must be remembered, knows nothing of what has transpired in the Transvaal, and all his opinions are made for him by those whose object it is to deceive him and poison his mind against us.

‘Let bygones be bygones, let us all be friends,’ chirp the Bond newspapers, by which they mean let the British blindly trust the Dutch and make further generous concessions, while the Dutch take all they can get and nurse their hatred. For what signs are there of any conciliatory disposition on the part of the Cape Dutch ? Does it not rather appear that their leaders and the Dutch Reformed Church are deliberately bent on keeping alive the bitter race feeling ? A short time since a bazaar for the benefit of the widows and children of Dutchmen killed in the war was held in a township in this part of the colony under the auspices of the Dutch Reformed Church. I am informed on excellent authority that one of the chief attractions was a sort of peepshow.

You paid your money, and looking through the contrivance you beheld an instructive tableau. A Dutch lad, the son of one of the leading men, lay on the ground dressed in British officer's uniform, dishevelled, his attire disordered, the boy simulating a hoggish condition of intoxication. Such was the object-lesson provided by the Dutch Reformed Church for the growing generation, lest it should forget its contempt and its deep hate.

At the present moment in Colesberg, if a Dutch lady were seen speaking to any of her former British acquaintances, she would probably be 'cut' by all her Dutch friends. The conciliatory measures that are being adopted make the disloyal hate us none the less and despise us the more, while they are forfeiting for us the loyalty of numbers of the British and Dutch who fought on our side. Here, as elsewhere in the colony, one hears of the constantly growing boycotting. The Dutch in Colesberg itself will not buy at the British stores what they can get elsewhere. In places where there are no Dutch stores these are being established. I know one condemned rebel who had no means of his own, but who yet, as soon as he was released from gaol, set up a store that must have needed considerable capital, and drew all the Dutch trade from the old-established British house. It is curious that many of the rebels who were once poor appear now to be well provided with funds. It looks much as if there is some organisation which supplies the necessary capital to found Dutch stores throughout the country, and so enable the 'exclusive trading' programme to be successfully carried out.

At Graaff-Reinet, I understand, there are now not only Bond stores, but Bond lawyers, doctors, auctioneers,

and so forth. The Dutch loyalist farmers, of whom there are few indeed in this part of the country, are, of course, being pitilessly boycotted. One who holds but a small farm used to earn his living chiefly by repairing the fences of his neighbours, shepherding their stock, and doing other work. He acted as guide to General French, and now the Dutch farmers, acting in combination, give him no work, refuse to let him have any of their veldt for grazing purposes, and he will have to abandon his farm or starve. There is no compensation allowed, of course, for this sort of thing, and the Dutchmen who assisted us in the war are having it carefully rubbed into them that loyalty spells ruin. We owe it to those who helped us to victory that we should not allow them now to be destroyed by the rebels.

The British here are bearing their losses like men, and are not seeking to obtain more than the altogether inadequate compensation that is being doled out to them. Happily, the British farmers who are ranching on a large scale and produce all their own forage and other necessities can afford to disregard the boycotting, as they are quite independent of their Dutch neighbours. A good many young Englishmen are successfully ranching in this part of the country, and it looks much as if the Bond, jealous of the increase of the British element on the soil, has given out the word to the Dutch not to sell their farms to Englishmen, for of late the price of land has enormously risen to the Englishman intending to purchase.

But it is pretty certain that a good deal of land will soon fall into the hands of the British ; for many of the Dutch farmers suffered such severe losses in the war that they will be compelled to sell at least portions of their extensive farms. The consequences of the Boer

invasion which they themselves invited are being brought home to the disloyal farmers. They had been led to understand that their own property would be respected by their friends the invaders. The Boer generals undoubtedly did their utmost to prevent all looting of farms, whether Dutch or British. Little, if any, wanton damage was done by the Boers themselves ; but the German contingent and 'the Irish Brigade,' who formed part of the invading force, when not under the eyes of the generals, conducted themselves like destructive Hooligans. It was the intention of the Boer leaders to pay for everything that was commandeered in the colony, and many chests full of sovereigns were sent down here for that purpose. But though the townspeople succeeded in getting payment it was otherwise with the farmers. The commandants and commandeering officers appointed by the Boers were for the most part rascals who, instead of paying for what they commandeered, put the money into their own pockets. Many of these men have enriched themselves out of the war. Here is an example of the attitude taken by such men as Generals Delarey and De Wet. who, throughout the invasion, behaved as soldiers and gentlemen. A rich British farmer was placed under arrest in his house at Colesberg during the Boer occupation, in consequence, as was proved by papers found in Pretoria, of malicious affidavits sworn by his own people, his disloyal neighbours. In his absence a Boer commandeering officer visited his farm, insulted his wife, nailed up the doors and windows, telling her that the farm was confiscated, and carried off the British farmer's horses and several very valuable thoroughbred mares. Delarey, on hearing of this, visited the farmer, apologised to him, advised him to bring his wife into town-as

she would be safer there, and at once restored all the looted animals. The commandeering officer he at once degraded and sent back to Pretoria. British farmers in this district experienced nothing but consideration and courtesy from the Boer leaders, and the better class Boers generally who took part in the invasion, which is a pleasant thing to record.

But to return to Colesberg and the ways of its Dutch Bond-trained population. The slightest manifestation of sympathy with the British on the part of a Dutchman is likely to lead to his persecution. Here is a curious instance of this. A prominent Dutchman with whom I am acquainted favoured the Boer cause at the beginning of the war, and was implicated in an attempt to raise a rebel commando. The military authorities reported the case to the Cape Government with a view to his being tried for high treason, but with no result at the time. Later on the man changed his views, realising the futility of further bloodshed, and he wrote a pamphlet in which he appealed to his brother Afrikanders to come to terms with the British. This has aroused the ire of the Dutch. His Colesberg friends will not speak to him; and now, though his original offence has long since been condoned by the military authorities, the case against him has been revived at the instigation of his enemies, and he is to stand his trial before the Treason Court. At the present time he is receiving numbers of threatening letters, in some of which the angry writers speak of shooting him; while, in others, the outbreak of another war, in which the Boers, having learnt their lesson, will be victorious, is predicted, when 'traitors' like himself will be trampled under heel and meet with their just punishment.

The Dutch are bent on ousting all loyal people in

order to obtain political supremacy. From their point of view they are quite right ; who can blame them ? But, on the other hand, the British, who are a small majority in the country, though not proportionally represented in Parliament, have at least an equal right to refuse to be ousted, and to combine to thwart the formidable organisation of the Bond—no easy task. I overheard a discussion in a Capetown hotel between a fresh arrival from England and a colonial. The Englishman was admiring the dogged perseverance, the slow, silent, well-directed concentration of effort of the Dutch towards the attainment by political means of what they failed to win by force of arms. ‘ They have struggled so manfully for the supremacy,’ he said, ‘ that they deserve to get it.’ ‘ I agree with you,’ said the colonial ; ‘ they do deserve to get it, but we deserve to go to hell if we let them get it.’ That puts the case in a nutshell. Cape Colony, as I have pointed out, is ruled by a Parliament, many of whose members were elected by now disfranchised rebels. The reins of government are, it may be almost said, in the hands of those who were conquered in war but are our victors in ‘ slim ’ diplomacy.

The country’s future for good or ill depends on the result of the next general election. I had heard so much in Capetown about the recent voting of disfranchised rebels, and of the various tricks that were employed to secure the return of Bond candidates, that, when in Colesberg, I was at pains to discover how the recent by-election had been conducted in this place. The ex-member was a rebel against whom were several serious charges. He fled the country when the invading Boers were repelled, was condemned in default by the Treason Court, and so forfeited his seat. The Bond

put up Mr. Cronwright Schreiner to take his place. At the election he was pluckily opposed by the Progressive candidate, Mr. M'Farlane; but the Bond nominee, as might be expected, won the seat by an overwhelming majority, securing, roughly, five hundred votes to the other's three hundred.

I found that some of the stories I had heard in Capetown were exaggerated; but disfranchised rebels undoubtedly did vote at this election. I cannot say how many did so, so I will speak only of the cases of which I have certain knowledge. Three men I know of voted subsequently to their disfranchisement by the Treason Court, their names not having been struck off the register. The rebels who had been condemned by the military courts were still on the register, it having been argued that they cannot be punished twice for the same offence; so many of these voted. I know of one case at least in which the vote of a rebel still serving his time in gaol was recorded. As it is not likely that he was let out on bail in order that he might vote, I presume that one of his friends impersonated him and voted in his stead. As for rebels who surrendered and confessed their treason to the Resident Magistrate, but who have not yet undergone their trial, their names, I gathered, were still on the register, and some of them voted. It was in good faith, I believe, that the rebels were permitted to vote, for the electoral system here in some ways renders trickery easy. Thus a man is not compelled to vote in his own ward, but can do so in any ward of his district on making a statement that he has not voted and will not vote at any other polling station. As the electoral districts are very large, the Colesberg district extending to De Aar, a man voting in a ward far from his own is not likely to be recognised,

and impersonation is therefore possible. At this election, for example, the vote of one rebel was recorded twice, once in his own ward and again in another, where possibly somebody impersonated him and used his number.

The Progressive agents will have to keep a close watch on the critical election that is approaching, and the scrutiny must be thorough, for the Bond is on its mettle and its agents are the 'slimmest' of the 'slim.' In this country the compilation of the lists of voters is made by the field cornets, who are entrusted with a great political power, which they often abuse if the party agents are not vigilant. When the field cornet holds his court he can remove a man's name from the register on an objection being lodged, the man who is thus disfranchised without a hearing having received no notice that any opposition was to be raised to his claim. The man may, therefore, not discover until he comes up to the polling station that his right to vote has been taken from him. At the recent Colesberg election a number of coloured men, whose names had been on the register, found, when they tried to vote, that they had been thus arbitrarily and unjustly disfranchised. Most people here consider that it was a mistake to extend the franchise to the black man, but it is significant that he almost invariably votes for the British and not for the Dutch candidate.

The Bond field cornets often, after they have posted up their lists for the scrutiny of the party agents, illegally add or strike off names of voters; and other ingenious frauds are practised. When the issue of an election has been doubtful a Bond Government has been known to remove all the British railway officials out of a district to prevent them from voting. The beauti-

fully organised Bond attains its ends without any fuss, and spends but little on election expenses. The Dutch farmers vote solid for the Bond nominee, even though he be an unpopular Hollander. There is little need for canvassing or the holding of meetings. I am told that at the by-election posters faced you on all the walls of Colesberg appealing to you in large characters to vote for the Progressive candidate, while none were displayed by the modest agents of the Bond. The word had gone round that Mr. Cronwright Schreiner was the approved candidate of the Bond. That was enough; all the faithful people rolled in to vote; even the cripples, the sick, and the very aged coming in from remote farms to the polling stations. Many of the successful candidates' agents were disfranchised rebels who gave their services freely. It is doubtful if as many as three Dutchmen in the entire district supported the Progressive candidate.

And so it is throughout the country: the Dutch farmers act as one man at the bidding of the Bond. It would be well if the British here were equally unanimous, all working together like their opponents, subordinating their conflicting interests to the common end—British supremacy in the colony. A Redistribution Bill which will give the towns a larger representation, and so also ensure a Progressive majority, though advocated by some of the most able men of the party, does not altogether find favour with the British farmers in the colony—than whom none in the country are more staunchly loyal or more indignant at the last surrender. But the farmers have their own interests to consider, and to them a full representation of the urban populations signifies the possible ascendancy of the capitalists, of the Kimberley diamond interests, which did for a

while rule the colony, and whose enormous wealth still practically remains untaxed. However, the leading farmers to whom I have spoken assure me that, doubtful though they be of capitalist policy, if they had to choose between a Bond majority and a Progressive one brought about by a redistribution on the lines suggested, they would unquestionably accept the Progressive as being far the lesser evil of the two.

Here, as throughout the colony, one finds the men of British blood, whether they be colonial born or lately from the Old Country, in a somewhat resentful state of mind. So bitter is the feeling among the younger men that one often hears them declare that they will never again in any circumstances take up arms for the Colonial Government. But if you ask a man to tell you what his special grievance is he as a rule will hesitate and perhaps find it impossible to frame a reply. The reason is that his grievances are legion, each insignificant, perhaps, by itself, but by their accumulation they are galling in the extreme, and they are ever with him. They are not disconnected grievances, but form part of one great trouble, all, in his estimation, springing from one cause. If the people at home who know what is good for colonials, better than the colonials themselves, had any single one of these grievances set before them they would probably laugh at its triviality. As well laugh at the proverbial camel because the last little straw crushed him. But the people with the troubles are not children. They are sturdy colonists, not the men to be angry without good reason. The feeling is the result of years of petty irritations. It is almost impossible for the home-staying Englishman to understand it, at all, but he would feel like these men had he lived here a while before the war surrounded by the Cape Dutch.

A typical colonial put the case to me in the following way : ‘ Before the war we were under ; the Dutch with intolerable insolence were ever casting Majuba in our teeth ; they despised us as an inferior race ; they boycotted us. Then came the war. We took up arms for the flag and for our own salvation. Some of us are ruined ; all have suffered great losses, for which we can never hope to be compensated. But that was nothing to us. We were glad to make the sacrifice provided we won the day. The British arms proved victorious, and we thought that our time had come at last, that instead of being under we should be on the top. But what has happened ? Great Britain, instead of frankly recognising that this was a rebel colony, and throwing it into the crucible with the two Boer States, has left the government of the land to the Cape Parliament, to men elected by disfranchised rebels. Those we fought and conquered are on the top of us as before ; we are under the Bond. The Cape Government is doing all it can to favour its friends at our expense. Treason is condoned, and a premium is placed on it. The Imperial Government refused to grant compensation to rebels ; but the first step of the Cape Parliament at its last session was to vote compensation to those who have been so lightly punished. The rebels round us now again, as before the war, laugh at us and triumph over us. That we took up arms for British supremacy is a mark against us with our own Government ; we are snubbed and ridiculed for our pains. For what did we fight ? ’

Thus was it put to me, and it may be an exaggerated representation of the situation ; for in his profound mistrust of the Bond and all its works the loyalist is apt to think he sees its finger everywhere, and to lay to

its charge evils for which it is in no wise responsible. But under all this lies the fully justified dread of Bond supremacy. The loyalists understand what that means—the arrest of progress; reaction; the keeping of the Dutch people in a state of ignorance, lest with eyes opened by education they should cease to follow those who now mislead them; the exclusion of the British from all political influence; the boycotting of them until they are compelled either to abandon the country or in despair to throw in their lot with the Dutch, join the Bond, and accept its narrow doctrines and policy.

There are many good people at home who do not like the sound of the term British supremacy. They should bear in mind that for some time to come the two races will not work together in the Cape Colony in the pleasant Utopian fashion some of our politicians have pictured to themselves. Of the two great political parties here one is practically exclusively British, the other as exclusively Dutch. Consequently, whether we like it or not, the result of the general election must be that one of the two races will attain the political ascendancy. Either the British or the Dutch must be ‘on the top,’ and of the two it will be undoubtedly for the good of the country if the British be on the top. British supremacy signifies justice for all, progress, and the spread of education. It is foolish to close one’s eyes to the facts. It is as possible for oil to mix with water as for the British party here to work in concert with the Bond. Those who desire to see the reconciliation of the two races should pray for a long period of British political ascendancy in South Africa, which will make the Bond realise that its manœuvres have failed, and that it can never again hope to attain its power. When

the Bond, having no further justification for its existence, ceases to be, then, indeed, will the true reconciliation be made possible, and we can hope to see old differences forgotten, the amalgamation of the two races for which Cecil Rhodes strove advancing gradually, and concord at last reigning in South Africa.

In the meanwhile, complain the British colonists, the Cape Government pets the ex-rebels and calls it conciliation, while it snubs the loyalists. When the Government ordered the disarmament of the Town Guards there was a storm of indignation throughout the colony. The men had been expressly promised that they would be allowed to keep their rifles after the war, and it was their intention to form themselves into volunteer corps. In many places the men refused to bring in their rifles, and the Government, then realising that it could not enforce the unpopular order, wisely rescinded it.

Accusations of unfairness are brought against the Compensation Commissioners appointed by the Cape Government. One commissioner here clearly betrayed his political leanings, for he put the following question to a farmer who was claiming compensation for cattle which had been looted in his absence: 'Don't you think it was indiscreet of you to leave your farm at this time?' and this though he had already been informed that the man belonged to one of our irregular corps and was away fighting the Boers. According to the Act, by the way, rebels receive no compensation until all the loyalists' claims have been settled. It is regarded as probable that the fund at the disposal of the commissioners will prove inadequate and the rebels will after all get nothing.

CHAPTER III

THE COLESBERG BATTLEFIELDS—VINT TO A BRITISH FARM—APPRECIATION OF THE VALUE OF LAND—THE ACTION AT SLINGERSFONTEIN—MIDDELBURG—A DISLOYAL POPULATION—BRITISH TROOPS AT MIDDELBURG—BOYCOTTING OF THE 'KHAKIS'—MR. DE WAAL—ATTITUDE OF THE BOND DURING MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S VISIT.

BEFORE leaving Colesberg I wandered over the veldt in the neighbourhood and visited the scenes of the repeated conflicts which occurred here during the operations of General French and General Clements. On the kopjes surrounding the town still stand the blockhouses erected by the British troops. They were recently sold by auction, and will now be demolished. For some time to come there should be little need to import corrugated iron or barbed wire for the use of the farmers of this region. The Cape Government appears to be almost morbidly sensitive in its anxiety to remove everything out of sight that might wound the susceptibilities of the Dutch. Thus I noticed, perched on a pinnacle of rock outside the village, a remarkably picturesque little blockhouse, shaped like a Chinese pagoda, and having a broad overhanging roof. An Englishman bought it with the intention of leaving it intact, as a memorial of the war. But I was told that the authorities had ordered him to pull it down, lest its presence might hurt the feelings of the passing farmer. Just outside the town is a little walled-in cemetery filled with the graves of our fallen soldiers. This burial-place will

be pretty when the trees that have been planted in it have grown up.

Within a short drive of Colesberg is the steep kopje which is now known as Suffolk Hill, in memory of the disastrous night attack made by the Suffolk Regiment on the Boer position in January 1900. All over the country one finds that the kopjes have been thus named after the regiments that distinguished themselves in holding or defending them. In this district we have Worcester Hill, New Zealand Hill, and others. On the slopes of Suffolk Hill one sees the scattered graves again, and here rises a conspicuous granite monument to the memory of Colonel Watson and the officers and men of the Suffolk Regiment who were killed in that fight. I ascended the hill and saw the level space at the top where the leading company, having gallantly carried the position in the darkness under a hail of bullets, held its ground until daybreak though its officers were all down. At dawn the survivors found themselves covered by the rifles of the Boers lying among the neighbouring rocks, and after a hopeless resistance were compelled to surrender.

From this point one commands a grand view over the brown kopje-studded veldt, the dark precipitous mass of Coleskop towering high above the lesser hills. It was to the summit of this peak that the men of the Essex Regiment succeeded in hauling up two 15-pounder guns, which harassed the Boer laagers and could have driven the enemy out of Colesberg itself had it not been out of the question to shell our own town. I heard the whole story from a Boer who took part in the fight. His account tallies with that given by Sir A. Conan Doyle, who, however, does not mention the fact that our guns opened a vigorous fire at daylight on the

summit of Suffolk Hill, killing several of the enemy after they had captured our own men. The Boer eyewitness of the fight spoke enthusiastically of the bravery of our soldiers. It is pleasant to record that everywhere in the colony one finds the Dutch, though bitterly hating everything else British, with nothing but words of admiration, even of affection, for the men of our regular army. Tommy, after all, is a more practical conciliator than the specious politician, and has done much to make the Boer respect British valour.

I wandered a little over the ranching country to the north-east of Colesberg, and visited the farm of an English friend which lies half way between the town and the Orange River. I drove to it under a cloudless midsummer sky across the parched brown veldt, for the desired rain had not yet come to make the country green with the fresh young grass. I passed occasional great herds and flocks, both sheep and cattle, looking in good condition, though it was not on grass but on dried-up shrub that they were feeding. On the way I met some Dutchmen trekking with a mob of cattle. They proved to be farmers from the Orange River Colony, not so long since our foemen and invaders, but now friendly and courteous. They had recently been repatriated, had visited the Cape Colony to purchase cattle with which to restock their farms, and they were now returning to their homes. Numbers of these farmers and also speculators who were purchasing cattle in the Cape Colony, to resell to the administrators of the Repatriation Fund at Bloemfontein or elsewhere, were thus trekking northwards; and as the Colesberg bridge, destroyed during the war, had not been rebuilt, they all had to use the bridge at Bethulie. The consequence was that, coming from all directions, they

concentrated on this portion of the route, and the local farmers complained that these great trekking flocks and herds coming through their farms were eating up all their veldt and drinking the water out of their dams, so that there was not sufficient for their own animals.

As I drove on I saw occasionally, separated far from one another, the green patches on the brown wilderness showing where were the tree-surrounded farms of Dutchmen or Englishmen. At last I came to my destination, a gleaming white house, set amid a refreshingly green plantation of poplars, acacias, and other trees. One could see at a glance that this was not the usual Dutch farm, with its ragged patch of pumpkins and little of anything else in the shape of vegetable cultivation. Here was a carefully-irrigated, well-tended garden, with its peach, mulberry, and other fruit trees, its strawberry-beds and vines, its plots of potatoes, onions, beans, cabbages, artichokes, and other vegetables, all thriving wonderfully, for almost anything will grow on this arid soil if it be but sprinkled with a little water. Thrice during the war the invading Free Staters occupied this farm, but inflicted no damage of any description; it was the same everywhere in the colony, and their behaviour on the whole was admirable.

I have heard it maintained at home that South Africa is no country for British farmers, and that few will be persuaded to try their fortunes here. I think people in Great Britain little realise how many men of British blood have been farming here for years with the greatest success. The best farms in this part of the colony are owned by our North-countrymen and Scots, some colonial born, others from home. They raise twice as much forage or crops of any sort out of an acre as does the ordinary careless and indolent Dutch-

man. It is these British farmers, too, who improve the breeds of horses and cattle. There are, of course, Dutch farmers as intelligent and keen as our Scots, but they are the exception. It is not only on the ranching but also on the irrigated agricultural farms that young Englishmen can do very well out here, as I realised several years ago when visiting English farms in the wheat-producing Marico Valley. There are some useful and patriotic schemes now on foot to purchase large tracts of land and to settle on them men of British blood. In the Transvaal there appears to be little land available that is suited for the British farmer; but in the Orange River Colony there is an abundance of such areas. In the Middelburg and some other districts of the Cape Colony the Dutch, as I have already said, are loth to sell land to Englishmen, and it is suspected that the Bond, which naturally does not approve of its power being weakened by the settlement of the British on the soil, has passed the word round to the Dutch farmers that they must not part with their farms.

But there are two forces at work which are stronger than the Bond itself. In the first place, many farmers owning more land than they really require will find it necessary to part with some of it in order to purchase stock and otherwise re-establish themselves after their losses in the war. In the next place, the extraordinary appreciation of land since the war holds out an irresistible temptation to farmers to sell, all the more so because in the opinion of many prices will drop again after the boom. In the Middelburg district the value of land has risen two or three hundred per cent. since the war, so that farmers selling a portion of their property find themselves far better off than they ever were before. The Cape Colony is undoubtedly richer for the

war, there are no signs of distress except among the boycotted loyal Dutch, and, as for the ravages of war, they are nowhere visible, even in the Colesberg district, where so much of the fighting took place. One would like to be able to say the same of the two conquered Republics.

In the Orange River Colony the Dutch are selling their land more readily than they are in the Cape Colony. There, too, prices are greatly enhanced. In that colony, at any rate for the present, the Bond does not rule, and is somewhat discredited. The Dutch farmers over the border accuse the Bond and the Cape Dutch of having invited them to invade the colony, making promises of assistance which they did not fulfil, and afterwards leaving them in the lurch. British farmers from the Orange River Colony told me that they were living in perfect accord with their Dutch neighbours. There the feeling against us was not nearly so bitter as it was in the Cape Colony. The reconciliation of the races seems to come quicker where the Bond does not reign.

The farm at which I was staying was under the heights of Slingsersfontein, where the troops of General Clements's force and the invaders under Delarey were on several occasions engaged. A short walk from the farm brought me to Worcester Hill, as it is now called, and there at the top of the gap that divides the twin peaks of this kopje I saw the white monument that has been raised to the memory of Colonel Coningham, Major Stubbs, Captain Thomas, and nineteen non-commissioned officers and privates of the 2nd Worcester Regiment, who here fell on February 12, 1900. The tablet on which all their names are inscribed is headed by the regimental motto, 'Firm.' And well did the gallant Worcesters justify their motto that day, when the small

isolated force withstood stubbornly the fierce Boer attack on this, the key of the British position. The enemy at dawn rushed our outposts, killing all the defenders of the sangars, and seized one of the twin summits of the kopje. Throughout the day endured the desperate struggle for the possession of the hill, and at last the Worcesters recovered the lost ground and compelled the Boers to withdraw after a loss of two hundred killed and wounded. Scattered over the hillside—where quantities of emptied cartridge cases still lie to testify to the severity of the fighting—are the groups of rough graves which one now so frequently comes across in this country, each with a little wooden cross at its head.

I left Colesberg on December 22, and after a night's railway journey reached Rosmead. From there I drove six miles across the parched Karroo under the cloudless sky, through the keen, pure, morning air, to Middelburg, where I was to spend my Christmas Day. At last, on reaching the summit of a low ridge, I beheld my destination in front of me about three miles distant, and the scene that thus suddenly opened out before me was of a simple grandeur that was certainly impressive. In front of me lay the rolling brown wilderness of the Karroo, wild Nature with, at that moment, no sign of human life on its broad surface. In the distance, forming the background, stretched strangely serrated ranges, marvellously coloured in the morning light, of soft tender tints of pink and violet, in striking contrast with the turquoise sky above and the dun plains below, the deeper shadows in the chasms and ravines of the hills being of the dark transparent purple of the garnet. In the centre of the picture, on the brown plain just before it commenced to swell up towards the hills, was an

oasis of dark green formed by the innumerable poplars and other trees that shade the village of Middelburg, so completely covering it that but one of its buildings was visible to me. That one stood out sharply against the other colouring from the middle of the green patch—a white edifice topped by a gleaming white tower, which I knew to be the Dutch church, the one sign of man's handiwork in all the landscape.

But soon, as we drove on, I saw to the right of the village, stretching for what appeared to be a couple of miles away, a broad band formed by a multitude of small white spots. These were the tents of the British soldiers, the camp of our garrison at Middelburg, now the largest in the whole Cape Colony. Then we drove into the village itself, a pleasant-looking, clean little place, with straight broad streets running at right angles to each other, lined on both sides with shady trees, and with a spacious avenue-surrounded market square. Each pretty Dutch dwelling-house stands in its own extensive grounds amid gardens and orchards of various fruit trees, while vines and red-blossoming roses overgrow the verandahs and droop over the windows, shading the rooms from the glaring sunshine. The whole village is embowered in a luxuriant vegetation, and affords a useful object-lesson of what can be done with this fertile soil by means of irrigation. There is an abundant water supply, and it would be easy to bring a considerable tract of the neighbouring veldt under cultivation. The day will no doubt come when one will be able to walk out of the streets of Middelburg into green fields. But at present, when one stands at any point within the village and looks up and down the street, or if one happens to be at the crossing of two streets and looks in the four directions in turn, one will see each of those

broad straight avenues of foliage end abruptly at each street-end in the arid wilderness of the Karroo.

Middelburg contains something under three thousand inhabitants, the overwhelming majority of whom are Dutch, and it is estimated that of the rich district of which it is the centre—a region of horse-breeding and cattle-rearing, ostrich-farming and corn-growing—quite 95 per cent. of the population is of Dutch blood. It is a population as bitterly Anti-British as any in the whole colony, and all the more bitter because the war never touched this region. The consequences of rebellion were never brought home to these people, and they have profited rather than suffered loss. As our military operations were not carried through to their conclusion in this colony, peace being arranged just as we were completing the great preparations which ensured the hemming in and destruction of the invading and rebel commandos, the inhabitants—unlike the Transvaal people, who fully realise that they were beaten—still imagine that the British were really defeated in the war, and that the Boers granted us over-magnanimous terms of peace. A farmer showed me a cutting from an English Socialist newspaper which certainly set forth this view in so many words. No one can realise until he visits this country how great was the mischief wrought among these ignorant people by the utterances of our Pro-Boers. The Leyds Bureau disseminated the Anti-British extracts from British papers throughout the whole of South Africa.

This district, in short, is fanatically Dutch, and is one of the principal strongholds of the Bond. The secretary of that formidable organisation, Mr. De Waal, the senior member for Colesberg, resides in the town.

A glance at a railway map of South Africa will ex-

plain why the military authorities selected Middelburg as the principal station for our troops in the Cape Colony. It is situated in the heart of the colony, and all the railway systems converge here, affording direct and alternative communications with the principal seaports, Capetown, Port Elizabeth, and East London, and with the north through Kimberley or Johannesburg. Situated at an elevation of over four thousand feet above the sea level, and enjoying a splendid climate, Middelburg has a high repute as a health resort, and is provided with an ample water supply. It seems to be, from all points of view, the most favourable spot at which to establish the permanent cantonment for our troops in the Cape Colony; and the fact that it stands in the centre of so purely Dutch a population, under the direct control of the Bond, perhaps makes the selection of the place all the more desirable.

Middelburg is at present the headquarters of the Eastern Sub-District, and about four thousand men were encamped outside the village, including the 16th Lancers, the Inniskilling Fusiliers, the 9th Regiment of Mounted Infantry, a Brigade Division of Artillery, and a company of Royal Engineers. The presence of so large a force, greatly exceeding as it did the civil population of the place, put, of course, a good deal of money into the hands of storekeepers and farmers, and the cost of all produce had risen greatly. But, despite the profits they were making, the Dutch bitterly resented the establishment of the military camp at Middelburg, and practically the entire population, voiced by the Town Council, petitioned that the 'khakis' should be removed from their country. The Town Council, too, as soon as martial law was suspended, proceeded to boycott the British officers, and refused to allow them to

play polo, as they had done hitherto, on the common, or to hold gymkhana meetings on the racecourse. The local authorities, in short, laid themselves out to give all the trouble they could, and there were signs to show that they intended to obstruct the military authorities in every way.

Mr. De Waal is a highly-educated and extremely clever Hollander. Of course, he realised the futility and folly of the attitude taken by the Middelburg people and the mischief that it might do to the Bond cause, especially during the critical period of Mr. Chamberlain's visit. He accordingly came up from Capetown, saw the leading Dutchmen of the district, gave out the word, and in a trice absolute harmony reigned. The town authorities at once abandoned their policy of obstruction, the prohibitions were withdrawn, and all differences were amicably settled. Mr. De Waal in Middelburg seemed a veritable ministering angel of peace, acting as the amiable intermediary between Dutch and British, and understanding both, smoothing down every difficulty that arose, the friend and adviser of both sides, the arch-conciliator of the land. He was certainly of the greatest service to our military authorities at Middelburg, and every credit is due to him, whatever may have been his motives behind it all. He mixed freely with the British, who could not but get on well with him; he frequented the club which our officers recently founded, and there I often found him chatting pleasantly, the personification of *bonhomie*. He extended the hospitality of his home to the British, and he and his charming family were ever welcome in British military society.

Such friendliness with the British on the part of an ordinary Dutchman would ensure his being cut by his

own people in this portion of the colony, but, as I have said, Mr. De Waal is the secretary of the Bond, one of its most able and trusted leaders, and all that he does is right and useful in the eyes of the faithful Bondsmen. I had several chats with this able and fair-spoken man. You gather from his conversation that he is entirely free from all prejudices, whether of race or otherwise. He deprecates the violence of the extreme party on his own side, and frankly acknowledges that the Bond often does foolish or wicked things ; and, on the other hand, he is tolerant of the excesses of the Jingoës on the British side and makes all allowances for their errors. And what is really in this man's soul, one wonders as one listens to him.

It may seem ungenerous for us to doubt the professions of the more subtle among the Bond politicians, and not to let full credit be given them for any good work they may do. But if the British in the colony believed in the recent protestations of the Bond leaders, which they certainly do not, and so far trusted them as to allow them to obtain a majority at the next general election, they would probably have bitter cause to rue their misplaced confidence. When one converses with the ordinary Bond leader—be it understood that I am not referring to Mr. De Waal, who is exceptionally astute—one is always wondering whether or not the plausible talker is under the impression that he is befooling one. The Cape Dutchman is cunning, but his vanity sometimes makes him overreach himself, for he is apt to regard every Englishman as a simpleton whom he can gull without difficulty. It is not unlikely that Mr. De Waal would be Prime Minister under a Bond Government. Anyone who knew this people could foresee that while Mr. Chamberlain was in the land the Bond, on

the surface, would be everything that was correct. Mr. De Waal, as I have said, gave the word to the people at Middelburg, and they promptly did as the Bond desired. It is the significant feature of the Boer character that the chosen leader is implicitly obeyed. Therein lies the strength of these people. It was because of this quality of obedience that they were so formidable in war; it was this that enabled undisciplined levies to fight so long and so sturdily. During the war we used to read of discontent and mutinies in the Boer forces. I remember that this was said of the commando of that brilliant soldier Commandant Wessels. There was no foundation for these tales; several of the Boer leaders were the finest men of their race, and they were obeyed.

With Mr. Chamberlain in the country the Bond^r was not likely to give itself away and show its hand, as it did when the Government at its instigation ordered the disarmament of the loyalist volunteers. The Government, as I have already stated, quickly cancelled the order when it understood that the infuriated British colonists, including the leading farmers, intended to approach Mr. Chamberlain on the subject, for the action of the Government, to many men's minds, afforded a sufficient justification in itself for the suspension of the Constitution. Consider the facts. General Brabant, then commanding the Colonial Defence Forces, in order to encourage the enlistment of volunteers, announced that those who fought for their country in the war should be permitted to retain their arms at the conclusion of peace, and it was understood that they should form part of the permanent colonial defence forces. As soon as martial law was suspended the Cape Government, in defiance of the promises of the military authorities, which had been specifically ratified by

itself, not only disbanded these volunteer corps, but ordered the men, under the terms of the Peace Preservation Act, to at once hand in all the rifles in their possession—those that were their private property as well as those which had been served out to them. As it is known that large quantities of arms that were employed against us in the war are still concealed in the colony, this order meant practically that the loyalists would be left wholly unarmed at the mercy of the secretly armed men who had so recently been engaged in rebellion. Moreover, it is pretty certain that under a Bond Government the magistrates would favour the Dutch when applications were made for permits to carry arms. The end of it would probably have been the arming of the Dutch element and the disarmament of the British. This dangerous order, which, had it not been rescinded, might have driven the loyalists to take extreme measures rather than comply with it, was issued by the Government that is ever preaching conciliation. Happily the question is now settled. The volunteers can keep their own rifles, and are permitted to purchase those that were served out to them.

The issue of the next general election is occupying all minds. The Bondsmen when they talk to you shrug their shoulders and smile, but will not venture an opinion as to the result. Of the Progressives, some appear over-sanguine, while others take a pessimistic view. The Dutch work quietly and in unison to attain their end. The Progressives are somewhat disorganised, and their electioneering machinery certainly seems deficient. It may happen that it will be 'a close thing,' and that neither side will obtain a large majority. But it must be borne in mind that the Bond members will follow their leaders as one man. A Bond Govern-

ment with a trifling majority will be able to have its own way. On the other hand, a Progressive Government that has not a strong working majority will enjoy but an insecure tenure of power. Conflicting interests will be represented by its supporters, and the discipline of the party is not like that of the Bond. At any rate, it need not be feared that what may be termed the Jingoës of the Progressive party will be able to pass unjust or extreme measures. There will be many who will vote against their own party if this were attempted.

The weather during my stay in Middelburg was certainly not suggestive of Yuletide. The temperature was high, a hot wind was howling across the veldt, a succession of thunderstorms, accompanied by torrential rain, passed over the village, to the delight of farmers, and between the showers the sun blazed fiercely out of the blue. But I could not have selected a better spot in which to spend my Christmas Day, for here I found myself among old friends, British officers, who had been my comrades in war in other parts of the world.

CHAPTER IV

AMONG THE FARMS ON THE BLACKWATER RIVER—PAMPERED REBELS—
A BRITISH FARMING COLONY—IRRIGATION SCHEMES—JOURNEY TO
BURGHERSDORP—THE BOYCOTT AGAIN—IMPUDENT CLAIMS FOR COM-
PENSATION—THE DOPPERS AND THEIR SEMINARY—FANATICAL HATRED—
CAPE DUTCH VIEW OF BRITISH LENIENCY.

I LEFT Middelburg on December 27 to visit the rich farming districts lying to the eastward, where the veldt is admirably adapted to the breeding of horses, cattle, and sheep, as well as to ostrich farming. The best land of this district, about twenty-five miles from Middelburg, is held by men of British blood. It is well watered by the branches of the Great Blackwater River, and the irrigated fields produce an abundance of cereals and lucerne. The Southey's are among the principal farmers of the district, the members of this well-known colonial family owning several adjacent farms, that of Mr. William Southey, for example, consisting of twenty-four thousand, and that of Mr. Charles Southey of twelve thousand acres of excellent veldt. The father of these two brothers was an able Cape politician, and was ousted from office in 1872 on account of his vehement opposition to the granting of responsible government to the Cape Colony. Like others whose advice we neglected, he clearly foresaw, as is shown by the record of his public utterances at the time, what the result would be. He warned Great Britain that her liberal policy must lead to Dutch supremacy in the colony, and ultimately to civil war. It came about

exactly as he had foretold. The Dutch majority ruled the country in accordance with Boer prejudice, treating the British in a British colony as if they were a subject race.

So it is to this day. The men of the Bond control the Government departments. In the country the majority of the magistrates and field cornets are of the Dutch party, and constantly abuse their great powers. In one district I visited, where there are several wealthy highly-educated British farmers, having a great stake in the country, and where there are none but poor and illiterate Dutchmen, I found that the Bond-appointed District Council, the field cornetship having become vacant, selected for this responsible post not one of the well-to-do British gentlemen but a Dutchman of no means, who could merely sign his name and no more.

As the result of our leniency and policy of conciliation the Dutch yoke is still on the neck of the British. The Cape Dutchmen, having suffered nothing in the war, far from evincing gratitude for our magnanimity, boycott the Englishman, exult over him, and talk openly of the next war. Many rebels who got considerable pickings during the war and whose unconfiscated farms have trebled in value, are better off than they ever were before, and afford an object-lesson to both British and Dutch loyalists, showing them how well rebellion pays in these days. There will be few, if any, loyal Dutch to help us if there is another war. Experience has taught our friends that the rebel comes well out of it, whether his side wins or loses, whereas the loyalist is the sufferer whatever the result. The Cape Government pampers the defeated rebel. But the Dutch loyalist, though the British are victorious, is left at the mercy of the pardoned rebels, who persecute

him to ruin. Put it to yourself: What would have been his fate had the Boers vanquished us? Without doubt the bullet, the rope, and the sjambok would have been the reward of his loyalty.

But still we go on as before, surrendering under the fond impression that we are successfully conciliating. It seems as if we should never take to heart the so oft-reiterated lesson. Great Britain has been particularly fortunate in the selection of her Governors for the Cape Colony. One after the other, down to Lord Milner—now the hope of the Cape loyalists, the man in whom they place implicit confidence—these far-seeing statesmen have sent unheeded their solemn warnings to Great Britain. How appropriate to the present situation are the following words which occur in a despatch written by Sir Harry Smith in Capetown in 1852, when Great Britain was meditating another surrender after subduing a rebellion :

‘ I am confident that if any change were made in the present state of things in the theoretical hope of gaining over a discontented party by yielding to their demands, such a proceeding would evince weakness on our part fraught with every evil, and perpetuate the belief that persevering resistance to her Majesty’s authority would ultimately ensure success. It would at the same time be not only disastrous to the parties now dissatisfied, but would sacrifice to the vengeance of the disaffected those who have remained loyal and faithful.’

Among the British farms which I visited in the district of which I have spoken was a large one, through the centre of which flows the Blackwater River. It was early morning as I drove in a Cape cart across the veldt through the pure bracing air of the uplands to the homestead of my friend. It was no small patch of

green, like that enclosing a Dutch farm, which faced me as I approached the house. It was an extensive oasis of verdure pleasant to gaze on after the brown veldt. From the vine-covered verandah I looked out on a broad tree-shaded garden of roses and old English flowers—hollyhocks, sunflowers, and others—while beyond the garden stretched carefully-irrigated fields of wheat, oats, mealies, and lucerne, with here and there clumps of poplars and willows. From here, veiled as it was by the rich vegetation, one could not see the brown wilderness that encircled this green spot, whereon all the birds and butterflies of the region seemed to have collected that morning. One might have imagined oneself to be far away from dusky South Africa on some farm in fair Normandy had it not been for the ostriches that one saw stalking beyond the wire fence.

When one entered the house of this lord of great flocks and herds one found oneself in a comfortable English home, the refining touch of the ladies of the house making itself everywhere apparent, an abode of grace and culture, with all the latest and best books on the table and everything around one to recall the happy country homes of our gentlefolk in England. Most of the farms within a radius of ten miles of this spot are owned by colonial-born Englishmen, who compose a little community of their own and are quite independent for society and everything else of their surly Dutch neighbours. They have a lawn-tennis club, which meets every Saturday at the different farms in turn. The meeting on this particular day was at my friend's farm, and in the afternoon the young men and maidens and the married couples came riding or driving in to the rendezvous from all directions. As one looked at these sturdy, cultured, colonial gentlefolk one thought what

a happy and prosperous land this would be could one get many more such as these on the soil. The land would support a far larger population, but a Bond Government is not inclined to undertake seriously the work of irrigation that would make vast tracts of now barren veldt blossom like the rose. The waters of a hundred rivers pour wasted into the sea. One sees many a place where the damming of a valley bottom would form a lake that would irrigate great plains. For years there has been a talk of utilising the Orange River and carrying its water by canals through the farming districts. British enterprise is now undertaking the irrigation of lands on a large scale in the Colesberg and other districts, and if young Englishmen of the right sort settle on these they should do well. It must be confessed that previous experiments in the same direction have sometimes not proved successful. Too many of the young men who come out here, though for a while they enjoy the novelty of the farmer's life, at last weary of the monotony of it; and as soon as they have made a little money they abandon their holdings and trek northwards to the goldfields for change and excitement. But there are thousands of the right men to be found at home and in the colonies, and a Progressive Government at the Cape would no doubt hold forth every inducement to them to come out. The farms in this district have appreciated two or three hundred per cent. since the war, while stock has greatly risen in price, a good cow that could be bought for £10 three years ago being worth £25 now. The fact that with such prices current the British farmers in the district are holding on to their property instead of selling and clearing out affords, I think, a sufficient proof that farming pays.

On the morning of December 27 I drove from my friend's farm across the veldt to the station of Schoombie and took the train to Burghersdorp. Rain had evidently fallen in the country we traversed, for pools of water lay on the ground, the young grass had come up, the veldt was green and fresh, while beautiful appeared the broad verdant savannahs that lay between the picturesquely-shaped and many-coloured ranges. On we went past blockhouse after blockhouse and coils of barbed wire lying by the railway waiting for a purchaser. The Dutch farmers, I am told, will not buy this wire that was employed to defend their country against the invader. We lunched at Stormberg Junction and saw on our left across the veldt the hills of evil memory, and early in the afternoon we reached Burghersdorp. This is a pretty little Dutch town with broad tree-lined streets situated in a valley that is watered by the Stormberg spruit, and round it are rolling open spaces of veldt studded with high rugged kopjes. The town is over five thousand five hundred feet above the sea, so that the air is keen and bracing. At midsummer, though it is hot throughout the day, it is deliciously cool in the morning when one mounts one's horse to take a before-breakfast scamper over the veldt. It is good in this highland climate to be on the trek and to sleep out at night under the stars. But in the winter a bitter wind howls over these bleak snow-covered steppes, and the frost is often intense. It was near here that during the war one of our large convoys was overtaken by a storm and every one of the oxen was frozen to death.

The white population of Burghersdorp amounts to about seventeen hundred and fifty, and the coloured population to roughly seven hundred and fifty. Of the

Europeans the Dutch compose the overwhelming majority, and, though Mr. Merriman pretends to think otherwise, they are disloyal almost to a man. Small as is the white population of the place, it supports no less than five churches—the English, Roman Catholic, Wesleyan, Dutch Reformed Church, and Dopper.

Here, as at Middelburg, British troops were stationed, to the delight of the British and exasperation of the Dutch element. As a rule, when one of these little agricultural townships first springs up the Dutch Church forms the nucleus of it and becomes the possessor of much of the immediately surrounding land. This was the case at Burghersdorp, and the Dutch Reformed Church refused to allow the military authorities to establish a camp on any of the lands that belonged to it. The neighbouring Dutch farmers, too, when they were approached on the subject, demanded a prohibitively high rental for their land. There would have been presented the curious spectacle of a British force in a British colony ignominiously wandering over the veldt, seeking in vain for a resting-place, pitchforked, so to speak, on from the farm of one to that of another as if it were a pack of thieving gipsies, had it not been that an Englishman, the proprietor of the Jubilee Hotel in Burghersdorp, happened to own a farm in the vicinity of the town, which he readily placed at the disposal of our troops when he heard of the difficulty that had arisen. On this farm, therefore, about two miles from the town, the camp now stands, the tents being pitched on gently sloping excellently drained ground, so that the position is a very healthy one; but water has to be brought from a considerable distance. The troops stationed here were the 1st Connaught Rangers and the 6th Mounted Infantry.

I drove from the station through the sleeping Sunday town to the Jubilee Hotel, but was not permitted to stay there long, for an officer who had recognised me in the street soon called and carried me up to the camp, there to stay with the Mounted Infantry. It is not easy for one who has spent years in watching our Empire-builders at work all the world over to pass through any place garrisoned by our troops without meeting old comrades in war, and this to such a man makes the white tents of a British camp ever a welcome sight. It was good to sleep again in a tent with the pure breeze of the veldt passing through, and pleasantly remindful of old times to have around one the manifold familiar sounds and sights of the camp.

In the quiet-looking little town itself I heard the same story as elsewhere. The rebels, to whom we were so lenient, are displaying a malignant feeling and treat their British neighbours with contumely. They realise that they are on the top again. Many of the better British people have left the town, so the Dutch are in a stronger majority than ever. Here, too, there is an organised boycotting of British storekeepers; but it is not so bad as in some places, in Cradock for example, where any Dutchman who is seen to enter a British store is called up by his countrymen and has to give an account of his conduct. If this explanation is not satisfactory they know how to punish him with effect.

There may be others, but I only heard of two loyal Dutchmen in the whole of Burghersdorp. These two served in the Town Guard, and on that account were being bitterly persecuted. It is thus everywhere. I met a British farmer whose forage had been burnt at

night by his neighbours because he had been captain of the Town Guard in an eastern village. The Dutch also knocked down the walls of a house which the British sergeant of the same Town Guard was erecting in view of his approaching marriage.

The ex-rebels here were sending in the most impudent claims for compensation, and it will surprise no one if these are ultimately satisfied by the Cape Government. Thus one man claimed compensation for the loss of some sheep which died on his farm because he was not there to look after them. He was away fighting against his King with a rebel commando. These people are confident that they will get what they desire, for they know that the Cape Government is their champion and believe that the British authorities are too afraid to refuse them anything. Those who sit in their armchairs at home and prate of conciliation -- which to the Cape Dutchman spells 'funk' -- and pooh-pooh the grievances of the loyalists would take a different view of things if they came and lived awhile in some parts of the Cape Colony. I should like to bring some of our Pro-Boer politicians to this neighbourhood and plant them down for ten years to earn their own living amid a purely Dutch community. It would be a just if somewhat cruel punishment, but long before the ten years had expired their eyes would be opened and they would understand.

Burghersdorp is a place of considerable importance, inasmuch as it is the headquarters of our bitterest foes, the Doppers. It is at this centre that at certain times they congregate from all parts of the country to hold their synods. The head of this fanatical body, the bishop as it were of the Doppers, Professor Cachet, resides in this town. He is a clever man of French

extraction, and his wife is the daughter of Postma, the founder of the sect, who brought about the secession of the Doppers from the Dutch Reformed Church. Professor Cachet's two sons served in the war on the Boer side, the eldest, who was killed, being a commandant with the Free State forces, the other being attached to one of the Boer ambulances.

Between the parent Dutch Reformed Church and the dissenting branch there is little love lost ; but the earnest members of both flocks, though they may quarrel over theological doctrine, appear to be united in their hatred of Great Britain, and have for years worked together to achieve our downfall. Here, at Burghersdorp, is the theological seminary of the Doppers, subsidised by the Cape Government, where all their clergymen receive their education. The good degrees that are taken at the university by the students of this seminary prove that the education afforded is an excellent one. But the history of South Africa under British rule as taught here is no doubt largely responsible for making the institution the hotbed of disloyalty it undoubtedly is. During the war the seminary was almost deserted, the students, with a few exceptions, serving on commando with the enemy, some, it is true, not as fighting men, but in the Boer ambulances, which, as we all know, often meant fighting in a more cowardly and treacherous fashion. Many of the students had been prisoners of war in Ceylon or St. Helena, and were daily returning to resume their studies as if nothing had happened, and to swagger about more proudly than they ever had done before.

I have clearly seen that the British in the colony, with the exception of certain ignorant roughs who probably did but little fighting in the war, are quite

ready to let bygones be bygones and to live on friendly terms with their Dutch neighbours, but it is the Dutchman who will not put aside his hatred. The most venomous of all in their hate are the parsons. Dopper leaders at Burghersdorp announced that they would have nothing to do with any Dutchman who has served in the Town Guard or otherwise lent assistance to the British. On a farm near here is the solitary grave of a colonial who was killed in one of the skirmishes. His friends wished to place a railing round the grave, but the Dutchman on whose land it was churlishly refused to allow them to do so. In the presence of some friends of mine a Dutch lady belonging to one of the best families in Burghersdorp, whose husband is suffering imprisonment as a rebel, put her little child of about five years of age through a sort of catechism, of which the following were the opening questions and replies : ‘ Where is your father ? ’ ‘ In tronk.’ ‘ Who put him in tronk ? ’ ‘ The English.’ ‘ Why did they put him in tronk ? ’ ‘ For nothing.’ ‘ When you grow up what will you do ? ’ The reply to this last question was a long one, the purport of which may be guessed. Thus in the Cape Colony is the lesson of hate and vengeance being carefully inculcated in the rising generation. I observed, by the way, that the Dutch boys of the better class were constantly practising at targets in the market square of Burghersdorp with air-guns—the possession of rifles being, of course, prohibited—simulating bayonet-thrusting with their toy weapons, and drilling each other.

Everyone I met who had recently travelled in the Transvaal or Orange River Colony told me that in those countries the Dutch were for the most part quite friendly, and that a remarkable change in the demeanour of the

people at once made itself apparent when one crossed the river into the Cape Colony. It is the Cape rebels whom we treated with such absurd leniency who are our implacable foes, not the ex-burghers of the two Republics. Many Transvaalers of the poorer class who had arrived from St. Helena or Ceylon were trekking through Burghersdorp to their homes. They were earning a little money on the way by selling the toys and trinkets which they had manufactured while they were prisoners of war. I noticed that while peddling these things they came up much more readily to their late foemen, the Englishmen, than to their kinsmen of the Cape Colony. The British colonials, out of good-nature, freely bought of them to assist them on their long journey. Briton and Boer were conversing in most friendly fashion, and there was no sign of bitterness on either side. One of the Transvaalers was chatting to some of us on the stoep of the hotel. 'You've got a hot lot of rebels here,' he said in English. 'They are all talking about the next war. I told them that they had not yet seen what war was like, that we Transvaalers for our part had had our bellyful of war and wanted no more of it. They would not believe me and cursed me as a "handsopper."'

There was a rumour afloat in Burghersdorp to the effect that the British troops are to be withdrawn from this and the other military stations in the interior of the colony. If this is so it will go hard with the unfortunate loyalists. The Dutch here will exult and at once assume that the evacuation has been forced on us by the Boers, whom they regard as virtually our conquerors. I have pointed out that the ignorant and credulous among the Cape Dutch—that is, the bulk of the population—firmly believe that the British were beaten in the

war. The educated people, of course, know better, but refrain from enlightening the masses, and even encourage the delusion. That such a state of ignorance as to events so recent can possibly exist will, I know, appear absurd to many people at home, but it undoubtedly does exist. At the risk of repetition I will endeavour to explain how the people have come to entertain so strange a belief, with what you would imagine to be convincing proofs to the contrary facing them daily.

To begin with, it is not in a Dutchman's nature to show mercy to a beaten foe, and he cannot understand magnanimity in others. *Va victis!* is his creed. Thus the Dutch in Burghersdorp implicitly believed that the conquest of the colony by the Boers meant for themselves the wiping out of all their debts to British people and the confiscation of all British property. That to them appeared to be the natural result of victory. They hoped by rebelling to entitle themselves to a legitimate share of the loot. Some English people whom I know own a house in Burghersdorp, and stayed in it throughout the occupation of the town by the invading Free Staters. Among their near neighbours was a Dutch family, the members of which had been on friendly terms with them before the war. The Dutch lady had greatly admired the prettily furnished drawing-room of the English home, and announced to some of her friends her intention of removing from her own into the other house as soon as the war was over and the conquered town became definitely part of the Orange Free State, which had already annexed it by proclamation. This house should be her share of the booty. But for old friendship's sake she showed some consideration for the English lady, and was overheard to say : ' I wish Mrs. X. would leave Burghersdorp ; for, having been acquainted

with her, it will be painful for me to have to turn her out of her house.' In like manner many other Dutch people in the town—even educated people—during the Boer occupation parcelled out among themselves in anticipation the possessions of their British neighbours. The British, they now argue, cannot be the victors, else they would not behave as they are doing, for the British are not confiscating but compensating. They are rehabilitating rebels, favouring them, and allowing the Bond to place them in Government posts; they have given the foe three millions sterling, and are restocking his farms.

To Cape Dutchmen it is absurd to imagine that a conqueror would thus treat a beaten foe. They are told by their clergymen that the Boer leaders agreed to a peace in the interests of humanity, that it is but a truce, and that the Dutch will yet be the masters of South Africa. Thus it is that, while the better men of the race, the Dutch of the Transvaal and the late Orange Free State, who fought us and suffered, whose country was laid waste, know that they have been beaten in war, and show signs of reconciliation and a willingness to bury the hatchet, the rebels of the Cape Colony, whose lands were never laid waste, who came off scot-free, who still rule the colony and the British in it through the Bond majority, remain our most malignant enemies. On this countryside I spoke to no single loyal man of British blood, whether he was farmer or trader, military officer who had been acting as commandant or administrator, clergyman or 'man in the street,' who did not take a dark view of the situation in the colony, and foresaw future trouble. Far from exaggerating the state of feeling in the colony, I have refrained from repeating the wild words I con-

stantly heard, the open talk of civil war, the angry and often rash utterances of man after man who had fought on our side but who declared that he would never do so again. It is very easy for people living in peace at home to deprecate this violence of feeling. If they had to live in the Cape Colony, however, they would understand.

CHAPTER V

A VISIT TO ALI WAL NORTH—A LOYAL TOWNSHIP—THE NATIVE VOTE—
FAVOURING THE REBEL FARMERS—COMPENSATION AWARDS—SUFFERINGS
OF BRITISH REFUGEES—OPEN TREASON—THE RINDERPEST FARM—THE
ALI WAL CONCENTRATION CAMP.

ON December 30 I reached Aliwal North, the prettiest and pleasantest little town of this part of the Cape Colony. It is situated on a height sloping down to the Orange River, and commands an extensive and beautiful view over the broad reaches of the turbid stream, which there flows between steep green rolling downs. The streets are lined with trees, and every house has its extensive garden of flowers and fruit trees. From the veldt the village appears like a mass of fresh verdure. This wealth of vegetation, which makes Aliwal so pleasing to the eye, is due to the abundant water supply, and—rare sight indeed in this part of South Africa—streams of clear sparkling water run down the paved gutters of every street. But this pellucid water, though it irrigates the gardens and pretty well-laid-out little park, is undrinkable for man or beast, for its source is the well-known sulphur spring, which bubbles out of the veldt about a mile and a half from the town, forming a deep reed-surrounded pool. From the spring the water, the temperature of which at the outflow is 95°, is carried in an open stone furrow to the mineral baths of Aliwal, frequented by those who suffer from rheumatic and cutaneous complaints. The waste water from the baths, cooling as it flows, is circulated through

the town by the paved conduits and the irrigation furrows. The water deposits much of its sulphur before it reaches the town and is not so impregnated as to be unfit for purposes of irrigation; but some plants do not thrive when watered with it, the peach trees here not living more than five years. For drinking purposes Aliwal has to rely on the rain water that is collected in the tanks, and when this supply fails in seasons of drought water has to be brought up in barrels from the Orange River, a tawny but quite wholesome fluid.

Aliwal is no longer a sleepy little Dutch village, for of late so many men of British blood have come into the town that the Dutch are in a minority, and the go-ahead spirit of the Anglo-Saxon is making itself manifest. Thus within a year Aliwal is to have a very good water supply. It has been decided, at a cost of £30,000, to heighten by 10 feet a natural dyke or bar which here crosses the river, so as to form a great weir. The power thus obtained by the employment of turbines will not only provide Aliwal with a sufficiency of water for domestic purposes and with electric lighting, but will also supply irrigation to farms on either side of the river. There is a talk, too, of building a sanatorium near the springs, which should pay well.

The town, with its preponderating British population, unlike Middelburg and Burghersdorp, was anxious that our troops should be stationed there. It offered the military authorities to let them have land free for their camp and to supply it with water. But for some reason this offer was declined. The high, narrow Frere Bridge, nearly 900 feet in length, here spans the river, connecting the Cape Colony with what was once the Free State. The great waggon road that leads to the Basutoland border crosses the river by this

viaduct. On the day of my arrival I took a walk across the bridge, and as I stood in the centre of it and looked northward towards the Orange River Colony bank the scene before me seemed in some way to speak more eloquently of the waste and wreck of war than anything I had seen since I had landed at the Cape. Bare rolling downs of forlorn and desolate aspect faced me. There were no dwellings of man on them save a few miserable Hottentot hovels built of biscuit tins, bits of wooden cases, fluttering rags, and what not; but on each bare height was a grim, deserted, loopholed block-house of stone guarding the approaches to the bridge, which itself was defended at both ends by little flanking fortresses made of corrugated iron. Near the river bank were strewn the remains of one of our great transport camps which had not yet been cleared away—great stacks of forage and other supplies covered with ragged tarpaulins, and a number of travel-stained ox-waggons. There were no human beings visible anywhere, and an artist who would make a picture of a lonely war-worn land might well have painted that scene just as it was that day. At the further end of the bridge I found a little hut with the word 'Customs' painted large over the door, once the custom-house of the Free State, but now an official is stationed here who will ask you to show your permit to enter the Orange River Colony if you look like an undesirable person. His chief duty is to see that no oxen cross the bridge into the Cape Colony. The Cape Government has enacted this prohibition as a protection against the rinderpest, for it is maintained that the Orange River Colony neglects to take the necessary precautions to prevent the spread of the disease. Consequently, when a waggon arrives from the North with a load for Aliwal,



THE CURVE AT ALA NORTH

the oxen are outspanned and left on the Orange River Colony side, while teams of mules provided by the town authorities draw the waggon across the bridge to the place where it is to be unloaded.

The atmosphere of Aliwal is happier than that of the other towns in the neighbourhood. One does not hear so much talk there of boycotting and other hostile behaviour on the part of the Dutch as one does elsewhere. Probably this is largely due to the fact that the post of parson to the local Dutch Reformed Church has for a long time been vacant. That it may remain so is the wish of all lovers of peace. Moreover, as more than half of the 1,200 white inhabitants of the town are of British blood, it is not possible for the Dutch to establish a really effective boycott. But, though the British are in the majority in the town itself, they form the small minority in the Aliwal district, not more than 2 per cent. of the farmers being of our race.

It is a district that supplied a large contingent of rebels, and the disfranchisement of these should enable the Progressives to return at least one of the two representatives of the constituency at the next general election. At present both members are Dutchmen of the Bond, the celebrated Mr. Sauer himself being the senior member. In the Cape Colony the coloured people vote almost to a man for the British candidate. But this constituency is a curious exception to the rule, the voters in the Basuto location in the district being Mr. Sauer's staunch supporters. The Basutos firmly believe, and others do so too, that Mr. Sauer was their secret friend during 'the gun war,' and they are not ungrateful for his services. At the last election the Progressive candidate lost his seat by only two votes.

The Progressives at Aliwal seem to be hopeful of the result at the coming election, and all loyal men, even those who took no interest in politics before the war, are anxious to do all they can to prevent the country from falling under the dominion of the Bond. By the way, where is the party that calls itself Moderate and is dubbed the Mugwump by the others? After leaving Capetown I did not meet one man who belonged to that party or who had the least confidence in Sir Gordon Sprigg, certainly the most unpopular man in South Africa.

Everywhere I heard great dissatisfaction expressed with the awards made by the War Compensation Commission appointed by the Cape Government; but it was at Aliwal that the reasons for this unanimous discontent—as far as the British element is concerned—were made clear to me. Members of the Government whom I met in Capetown pointed with pride to the Compensation Acts which had been passed by the Cape Parliament. On the surface these certainly seemed the most patriotic measures. It was laid down that the loyalists should be compensated for their losses in the first place, and that afterwards rebels who had surrendered should receive their share of compensation should any funds remain over. I was assured that the compensation of the loyalists would almost certainly exhaust the fund, and that in that case the rebels would get nothing.

This all sounded very well, but an examination of the working of the ingenious scheme and an analysis of the compensation lists show that what was practically effected and possibly intended was the compensation of the disloyal Dutch farmers almost exclusively. All loyalists I meet call the Compensation Act a farce and

a fraud, the system and the administration of it ensuring the compensation of the wrong men. One would have thought that it was deliberately framed as a machine for making presents to the treasonable at the expense of the loyal taxpayers. Spriggism, when one comes across it, brags of its policy of conciliation, by which it means gratifying the Dutch and exasperating the British element by its injustice, unconsciously perhaps, but at the prompting of the scheming Bond, which foresees what the result will be. The 'South African Review' well named the conciliation movement 'a wolf masquerading in sheep's clothing.' But it must be borne in mind that the loyalists are not asking for further compensation. Many, disgusted with the methods of the Commission, never sent in their claims at all. It was the naschievous injustice of the whole system that aroused their indignation. Those I have spoken to say that they would rather that no compensation were given to anyone except, of course, to the really poor, who, as I shall show, were getting but little under this beneficent Cape Act.

Whenever it came to a question of awarding compensation to a loyalist the Commissioners seemed to do their best to wriggle out of it. They laid it down that no compensation would be paid unless the losses incurred were direct in the most restricted sense of the word. They held that the large majority of the claims put forward by the British residents in the town were for indirect losses, and so they disallowed them. The claims of the Dutch farmers, on the other hand, which were for direct losses, were nearly all admitted. The great bulk of the fund thus goes to these people, who are known to have been rebels almost to a man during the war, and who gave freely to the Boers the cattle and

sheep for the loss of which they are now claiming compensation.

When the Boers occupied Aliwal they issued a proclamation to the effect that all males who did not leave the town within forty-eight hours would be commandeered and compelled to assist the invaders. The large majority of the British left the town, many of them to join Brabant's Horse, and as troopers to return later to help to drive the invaders out again. This expulsion of the inhabitants pressed very hard on the poorer people of the artisan class. Their occupation was gone, but they had to go on paying rent for the houses they had abandoned. In many cases they had to expend as much as £10 for the hire of carts in which to carry away their belongings. Those who left property behind found on their return that it had been stolen. Some had to borrow money and cripple their future in order to support their families through the long period in which they were earning no wages. Many of the poorer class had to travel on foot to Queenstown and other distant places before they could receive assistance. The sufferings and losses of these people, some of whom were ruined, were much more severe than those incurred by the Dutch farmers, to whom the loss of a few head of cattle was a little matter, and whose farms and remaining stock have trebled in value since the war, so that without compensation they would in nearly all cases be far better off than they ever were before. But to these farmers compensation was freely given while it was refused to all the poor Englishmen because, forsooth, their losses were indirect. The Cape Government even refused to grant these penniless refugees free railway passes to enable them to return to their homes after the Boers had withdrawn. When they presented their

claims the Commissioners, acting, as a local paper put it, 'as apostles of the Schreiner doctrine of neutrality,' took the extraordinary course of telling them that they were not justified in leaving the town. They should, it was said, have stayed with the Boers and quietly carried on their business as usual. In other cases, where Englishmen had remained in the town and faced the situation, the Commissioners took another line, and suggested that these persons had assisted the enemy during the Boer occupation. A man I know had three of his horses taken from him as he was leaving the town. In the eyes of the Commissioners this was either not a direct loss or the man was to blame for trying to get his horses away, for compensation was refused.

It was suggested by the British residents that in every district there should be chosen a loyal person of good standing, a man trusted by the people, who should assist the Commissioners with his local knowledge and his acquaintance with the character of the various claimants and witnesses. This the Commissioners would not have. The result was that, whereas the few British farmers in the neighbourhood, men of high character, sent in absolutely fair claims, setting forth their exact losses, a number of Dutch farmers lodged preposterous claims, which, nevertheless, were admitted. The Commissioners, when sifting a claim, insisted on the production of direct evidence to show that the damage was inflicted by the enemy or by our own troops, and by no one else. Thus a British farmer I know of counted his sheep immediately before a Boer commando crossed his farm, and on recounting them immediately afterwards found that forty were missing. He came across the skins of four of the animals at the spot where the Boers had halted and cooked their meal. Surely here

was circumstantial evidence, which, if credited—as it was—should satisfy one that the Boers, after they had killed and eaten four of the sheep, had driven off the other thirty-six. The farmer, when he was asked whether or not anyone had seen the Boers carry off the sheep, truthfully replied in the negative, explaining that he himself had remained within doors until the Boers had passed, and that his boys were hiding themselves at the time. His claim for the thirty-six sheep was disallowed, though he received some compensation for the four that had been killed. But the Dutch farmers were never at a loss to produce all the evidence that was required to substantiate their claims, as those who know them can well imagine. It was always easy to pick up ‘bywoners,’ who, for a consideration, would testify to anything that was asked of them. However strong the circumstantial evidence it would not suffice. The Commissioners insisted on having direct evidence, and the character of the man who gave that evidence was apparently a matter of no importance in their eyes. Direct evidence was furnished to them in plenty. It was thus the disloyal and dishonest who really profited by this notable compensation scheme of the Sprigg Government.

The Aliwal loyalists maintained, and apparently with good reason, that the Bond-ridden Sprigg Government, even when its doings appeared most fair on the surface, was ever playing into the hands of the Dutch farmers—that is, of the men who were responsible for the Boer invasion of the colony and the consequent evils. Thus it was a well-known leader of the Bond—intimately acquainted with the conditions prevailing in the great horse-breeding districts which I have recently visited—who recommended the plan which was adopted, and by

which £5 was fixed as the sum to be paid in compensation for the loss of a horse that had been taken to the protection camps. Whatever the value of the horse, its owner was entitled to this sum, and if he accepted it that settled the matter. But if his horse was a valuable one, and he refused to take so small a sum, he had to adduce convincing proof of its value, and he may have to wait a long time for his compensation, if he ever gets it at all. Now, the Dutchman generally has a lot of worthless animals on his farm, and for these, as well as for his foals, it will pay him very well indeed to receive £5 apiece. Numbers of animals of this description were sent to the protection camps and there died. On the other hand, on the average British farm there are few horses to be found that are not worth a good deal more than £5 each, while a thoroughbred stallion or mare is, of course, often worth several hundreds of pounds. The Englishman is, therefore, likely to lose and the Dutchman to benefit by the £5 rule. The more one considers the question the more one is likely to agree with the loyal colonists who hold that, as far as the Cape Colony is concerned, it would be better if no compensation for war losses were given to any one. The compensation awarded by the Cape Government goes to the already notorious enemies of Great Britain ; while those who have the greatest claim of all, the loyal Dutchmen who are being ruined by the vindictive boycotting, receive no assistance whatever under any enactment that the Sprigg Parliament has passed. Friends of the Bond have indignantly denied that any but loyalists have received compensation for war losses ; but a loyalist, as defined by the secretary of the Bond, is anyone who has not been tried and found guilty of High Treason.

Despite all the kindness that has been shown them,

the Cape Dutch in many districts are quite openly 'spouting' the rankest treason, and convicted rebels are displaying an overbearing insolence. It is otherwise with the ex-burghers of the Transvaal and the Free State. At Aliwal I saw several fine-looking well-dressed Dutchmen enter the bar of the hotel, where they drank beer and chatted in friendly fashion with British acquaintances. I had never seen the Cape Colony Dutch behave thus at up-country bars, and on inquiry I found that these were natives of our newly-acquired colony beyond the river. They had been prisoners of war in Ceylon, and were now on their way to their farms in the Wepener district.

I decided, on leaving Aliwal, to travel by road to Bloemfontein. The people take their Christmas holidays seriously in this part of the world, and carry them on well into the New Year; for it was only on January 6 that the stores were reopening in Aliwal, and no transport waggons were going through the town, so that I was compelled to wait several days until transport riders and others should return to their avocations. At last my opportunity for travelling north arrived, for some waggons came in from Wepener, and one was to return to that place as soon as it was loaded up. I therefore arranged with the transport rider to take me and my belongings with him to the town of the memorable siege, which is eighty miles from Aliwal, on the Basuto-land border.

While awaiting the arrival of ox-waggons, I wandered about the neighbouring country. I visited Mr. Armstrong's rinderpest farm, ten miles from Aliwal, where is now manufactured all the serum with which the cattle throughout the colony are inoculated. The Kimberley serum manufactory has been abandoned, and the plant

has been brought to Aliwal. The process of manufacture is a most interesting one. Inoculation has proved thoroughly successful, though the immunity it affords is not of long duration. A simultaneous inoculation throughout the country would at once stamp out the rinderpest; and happily there can never again occur so terrible an outbreak as that of 1896, which destroyed 97 per cent. of the cattle in Rhodesia, and also played havoc among the big game.

I also visited the concentration camp near Aliwal, all the occupants of which had now been repatriated. The camp is situated on a breezy green down overlooking the Orange River. Within the barbed-wire enclosure still stood the brick houses and corrugated iron buildings that once served as the church, schools, hospitals, and so forth; but the tents and huts in which the people lived in greater comfort than they had ever known before had nearly all disappeared. After the enteric and other diseases had been stamped out the refugees were well and happy here; many were sorry to leave, and had almost to be driven out. The people at Burghersdorp told me that there was a dearth of servants in that town, and that they had sent to Aliwal offering as high wages as £4 or £5 a month. They were unable, however, to persuade any of the Dutch girls to leave their comfortable concentration camp to go into service. While the Dutch were thus living in comfort at our expense our own refugees were suffering great privations, bivouacking on the beach at the seaports, insufficiently clothed and fed, and the more weakly falling victims to disease.

CHAPTER VI

IN THE ORANGE RIVER COLONY—A JOURNEY IN AN OX-WAGGON—WITH
DUTCH TRANSPORT RIDERS—A RUINED LAND—FRIENDLINESS OF THE
PEOPLE WRECKED HOMESTEADS—THE REPATRIATION OF THE EX-
BURGHERS INSOLENCE OF THE BASUTOS—BLACK MISSIONARIES

ON the afternoon of January 7 I left Aliwal North, crossed the broad brown Orange River by the Frere Bridge, and joined the waggons then inspanning on the further side, with which I was to make a six days' trek to Wepener. The little custom-house at the bridge-end brought it home to me that I was leaving the Bond-ridden Cape Colony for a land under the immediate rule of the Imperial Government. For the present I had done with the Cape Colony and the discussion of its inextricably mixed politics.

After a month of wandering in the districts which had supplied the greatest number of rebel recruits to the invading commandos, I could not but come to the conclusion that the racial feeling, far from showing a tendency to moderate, as some would have us believe, was getting more bitter, and that for this the machinations of the Bond were largely responsible. The British colonists would welcome reconciliation, but the Dutch doggedly reject it. It is not only in these border countries which I visited, but in most other districts of the colony likewise, that this irreconcilable spirit is displayed. The persecution of loyalists was so severe in the Calvinia district that some British people I know, who had long been settled there, were recently com-

pelled to leave it. Two British officers in uniform, on riding into the market square of a little township of that neighbourhood, were quickly surrounded by a crowd of Dutchmen singing seditious songs. They tore the officers from their horses, and began to beset them with sticks, so that one of the officers had to draw his sword and clear a way for escape.

In that region the predicant is often the agent of the Bond and organiser of the boycott. If he hears that a Dutch family has any dealings with the British he makes it his business to pay a call on the offenders, and in the course of conversation a dialogue something like the following will occur: 'And so that poor child Piet has been ill again?' says the predicant. 'He still looks in bad health. By the way, who is your medical man?' 'Dr. Jones,' replies the mother. 'Indeed!' remarks the predicant; 'but have you not heard of that clever young man Dr. Niekerk, who has just come here to start a practice? He is an Afrikaner, and I think you should call him in when there is sickness in the house.' So the family, knowing what would be the result of neglecting the hint, changes its doctor for the one appointed by the Bond. The Bond is sending to the various townships its own doctors, attorneys, auctioneers, and so forth, and the predicants are instructed to pass round the word that must be obeyed.

Meanwhile, Bond statesmen in Capetown deny that there is any boycotting. South African British are dismayed to find that the specious sham conciliatory utterances of the Bond are imposing on so many at home. Is it realised in Great Britain that through Bond strategy the British cause is weakening day by day in this colony, that in a twofold way we are losing adherents wholesale? In the first place, Bond boycotting is driving

numbers of the weak-backed British into the ranks of the renegades. They despair of help from the British Government, so they throw in their lot with the Boers in order to avoid ruin. If there was another war many of these men would fight on the Dutch side—they openly say so—while others would secretly assist the enemy, knowing now on which side their bread is buttered. In the second place, there is a considerable section of sensible loyal Dutchmen in the land who are anxious to live on amicable terms with the British. But the tyranny of the Bond, supported by our own leniency to rebels, makes it impossible for these men, unless they would sacrifice everything, to be anything but our declared enemies. All the optimistic talk about living side by side in amity, forgiving and forgetting, is meant by our enemies to put us off our guard until the time comes to strike. Here men still dream of a United South Africa under another flag. A well-educated young colonial of British blood, but a member of the Bond, thus put it to me: ‘The British cannot keep South Africa. All your settlement of Englishmen on the soil will not help you, for the Dutch breed so fast that they must in time compose the great majority of the population. When that majority calls for national independence can a Liberal British Government refuse to grant it? Would it not be opposed to all Liberal principles for your Government to enforce its rule on an unwilling people of European blood?’

The Dutch transport rider with whom I had arranged to travel to Wepener had five waggons under his charge, and these all started together shortly after I had crossed the bridge. The sun was setting as we ascended the bare blockhouse-lined downs that slope to the river, and from here one looked back on a beautiful

landscape. The valley of the Orange River formed the foreground, beyond it was tree-embowered Aliwal set like a green gem in the rolling, treeless, and bushless brown veldt, which glowed like dull gold in the sunset, while far off dark violet ranges formed a glorious background. Thus once more I found myself on the trek, recalling pleasant memories of treks I had made long ago in a rougher land, far to the north of this, many hundreds of miles distant from the nearest railway, where a waggon journey often occupied several months. In those days I had always found the Dutch transport rider a good fellow to get on with, and so I found him now.

With our caravan of five great waggons, each drawn by its team of sixteen oxen, and carrying its eight or nine thousand pounds of miscellaneous freight—my particular waggon was loaded with a safe weighing 1,200 lb., paraffin, farming implements, and ready-made doors and glazed window-sashes for war-dismantled homesteads—were four Dutchmen of the Orange River Colony and half a dozen Basuto boys. The Dutchmen had all fought against us in the war with the Free State commandos under Delarey, De Wet, and the other leaders, and had ultimately become our prisoners. They had the pleasant rough courtesy of the unspoilt Boer of the veldt, and we were soon on most friendly terms. They were quiet, simple, God-fearing fellows, and each night—whether it was the beautiful still starlit night so frequent here, or whether it rained and thundered and blew—after we had outspanned, they gathered together and reverently sang a psalm before turning in under their blankets to sleep. These men showed no signs of bitterness or anti-British feeling, and I can say the same of every Dutchman I met on the road during this six days' trek across a devastated

country. No region suffered more in the war than did this south-east corner of the Free State. It was swept over and over again by our troops and by the Boers. It was cleared of everything, and, to quote from Sir Conan Doyle, it was at last 'verging on the state which Grant described in the Shenandoah Valley: "A crow," he said, "must carry his own rations when he flies across it."' Every farmhouse I passed on the road had been destroyed or completely gutted, most of the people had lost all their cattle, sheep, horses, and grain, and yet here I experienced nothing but courtesy, friendliness, and primitive hospitality.

I had been told before I came here that I should find the attitude of the inhabitants of the Orange River Colony very different to that of the Cape Dutch, and so, indeed, I found it. And yet these Cape Dutch, who display such bitterness and malice, lost nothing by the war, and in many cases made a good deal of money out of it. The Cape rebels whom we treated with such leniency hate us, while the war-ruined ex-burghers of the Orange Free State are quite ready to shake hands and make up the quarrel. Here British and Dutch get on amicably together, and one hears nothing of boycotting. I think I was enabled to form a pretty good idea of the true feeling of the inhabitants of this part of the country during my journey to Wepener, for all I met with talked freely and naturally as we were either walking together by the side of the straining and groaning waggons, drinking coffee during a halt, or eating our simple meals—hard bread soaked in coffee in the morning and strips of biltong or ribs of mutton roasted in the ashes in the evening. It was obvious that here, at any rate, a British traveller is not regarded as an object of mistrust and dislike.

We had some fiercely hot days during the journey, so most of our trekking was done in the cooler hours. Thus as a rule we travelled from two in the morning until seven o'clock, when we outspanned and rested, while the cattle grazed, until about four in the afternoon. Then we inspanned again and trekked for four or five hours more. How often has the waggon that with groaning timbers makes long journeys across the rolling veldt been likened to a ship at sea, and, indeed, the more one considers it the more striking does the likeness appear! There is the same uncertainty as with the ship under sail. The waggon may be weather-bound for days. At times, like the ship in light airs, it wallows very slowly along the deep mud furrows; and at times it comes to a rough road, where it tumbles about with a violence of shock that the liveliest of craft on the choppiest of seas can never attain. With its seven tons or so of dead weight the waggon staggers along, leaping and falling, not from yielding sea to sea, but from solid boulder to boulder. The particular waggon in which I made my home even had its dinghy, so to speak, towing astern, in the shape of a little Basuto pony fastened to it by his halter, and I could, as it were, go ashore with him when I pleased, sometimes riding to a farmhouse off the road or to a distant pool of water to fill my canvas bottle, and sometimes boarding another waggon to visit a friend. We had with us, too, a dog whose habits and manners were much those of the ship's dog. He wore a medal with the letters 'R.C.' and a number inscribed on it, which showed that he had accompanied the womenfolk to the refuge camp, where every dog admitted had to carry his permit in this fashion. It was always over a sea of verdure that the waggons slowly moved, with the frequent picturesque

rocky kopjes swelling above the undulating veldt like crested rollers.

It was a lonely but a lovely country across which we travelled day after day, following the ruddy, often deep-rutted, road that the passing of many waggons had worn into the surface of the veldt. This south-east corner of the Orange River Colony contains some of the richest farming land in South Africa, and here the veldt was now beautifully green in places, the grass being already high, with many-coloured flowers scattered over it. The country is well adapted for the raising of stock and the breeding of horses, as well as for agriculture. The broken enclosures of once-ploughed fields showed that large tracts had been under cultivation here, and on these slopes magnificent crops of wheat, oats, and mealies were once produced. But war had passed over the land, and on many a farm there had been no sowing nor harvesting for nearly three years.

In our first evening's trek, as soon as we had lost sight of the Orange River, it became apparent that we had left the region of deserted blockhouses and entered that of ruined homesteads. Each day we passed several of these, and of all the farmhouses that were situated near the road I could not see one that had escaped partial if not complete destruction. Some of these farmhouses were large and comfortable in appearance, the farmers in this rich district being generally well to do. Where the farmhouses had not been burned they all presented much the same appearance. One saw nestling amid its surrounding clump of dark green trees the deserted homestead of red brick, roofless, with every scrap of woodwork torn away, the empty doors and windows gaping. Nearly all the wire fencing had been dragged from the stout stone blocks that in this treeless

country take the place of our wooden posts, and the gates that divided farm from farm had disappeared along the whole length of the road, having, like doors and window-sashes and roof-beams, been used for fuel by the passing troops. I visited several of the farms, and found that in every case either the farmer himself or some of his family had come back to the land. For the repatriation of the people had been proceeding for some time, and was practically completed, only 15 per cent. of the inhabitants being still absent from their homes. All the repatriated farmers I met were diligently putting their wasted properties to rights, restocking, sowing grain, repairing fences, and so forth. They and their families were occupying temporary sheds or tents in the vicinity of their wrecked homes.

In many cases a good deal of work had already been done, and fine crops of mealies were to be seen on many of the farms. The District Commissioners of the Repatriation Board were entrusted with wide discretion, and worked to a great extent on different lines. I found that the wealthier farmers whom I met in this neighbourhood were receiving no assistance. They were purchasing in the Cape Colony with their own money all the stock, seed, and farming implements they needed. To the smaller farmers the Commissioners were supplying cattle for ploughing, sheep, and other requisites. In some cases the farmers paid for these in cash at cost price, but in cases where they were unable to do this the value of what was supplied was regarded as a loan on the security of the farm, on which no interest was paid for two years. If the capital is not paid back at the termination of that period the mortgage begins to bear 3 per cent. interest. It is understood that the farmer must redeem his mortgage or promissory note as soon as

sufficient funds come into his possession. For example, in the Wepener district the military authorities were paying those who could produce proper receipts, for the cattle, grain, forage, and so forth, that were requisitioned by the troops. If a farmer claiming under one of these receipts had received assistance from the Repatriation Board, he had to apply the money paid to him by the military authorities to the settlement or part settlement of his debt to the Board.

In the absence of the Dutch farmer his wife is quite capable of conducting his business. Thus, on one small farm I met a woman whose husband was still on his way from Ceylon. She had obtained some raw oxen from the Commissioners on the security of a promissory note, had trained the animals, and with the assistance of her two daughters had, without any male help, ploughed and sown a considerable portion of the farm. 'He will soon be back now,' said the good wife, laughing, 'and won't he be astonished and pleased to see the crops we have raised for him!' (On many another farm the women have thus been working hard, sowing and reaping and putting things straight while their husbands were beyond the seas as prisoners of war. The spirit they have displayed is admirable.

The really destitute women and children receive rations from the Repatriation Board, but in regions where there are relief works, or where, as in the Wepener district, work in the village and on the farms is readily obtainable, no rations are issued to able-bodied men, as it is not desirable to bring into existence in the country that hitherto unknown nuisance a pauper section of the population. There are not wanting in the land lazy ones to whom pauperism would be congenial. Some would have passed the remainder of their lives in the

concentration camps had they been permitted to do so. When the poorer people were turned out of these camps they were supplied with seed potatoes, oats, and mealies, and each family was offered the loan of a team of ploughing oxen for a week. Many made no attempts at sowing, but remained on their farms until they had eaten all the seed grain and potatoes, and then returned to the camps, where they had been more comfortable than ever before in their lives, and requested to be readmitted. It has been proved that a large proportion of those who applied for free rations had quite considerable funds at their disposal, hidden away for the present, as they intended to get all they could out of the paternal British Government.

People here laughed at the gullibility of the Europeans and Americans who were imposed on by the pitiful 'yarns' of the lecturing Boer generals. As a matter of fact, distress, as the term is but too well understood in Europe—the distress, for example, that we always have with us in London—was, as far as I could gather, practically non-existent in the colony, despite the ravages of the war. It would be difficult to find a Dutchman who cannot supply himself with the necessaries of life. In the Wepener district there was certainly no real distress, and even the poorest seemed to be fairly well provided with money. Men who have told a piteous tale have been seen, after they have been refused free rations at the Court House, to enter the nearest store and make quite extensive purchases. In another district several hundred men who had applied for rations were sent to some relief works near Bloemfontein, where their wages were to amount to four-and-sixpence a day. A very small proportion of them arrived at the works, the majority of these 'destitute'

people having the wherewithal to support themselves without toil. But among this sturdy Boer population one finds plenty of men of grit who are the reverse of loafers. One old fellow, whose possessions before the war were worth between £2,000 and £3,000, found on his return from Ceylon that he had lost everything. He was not cast down in the least, but went off to the Commissioners of the Wepener district and said to them : ' I have not come here to beg ; I can soon re-establish myself by working. Can you give me some work ? ' The question was talked over, and it ended in the old man receiving a Cape cart and mules, for the value of which he gave a promissory note, his plan being to earn his living by carting building material for those who were engaged in the reconstruction and restoration of the many wrecked houses in the village. Within two months he came back to the Commissioners to say that he had earned a fair sum of money and was now able to pay them for the cart and mules.

There could be no doubt that in the south-east corner of the Orange River Colony the people were settling down in a more satisfactory way than anyone would have ventured to hope. They were cheerily setting to work to re-establish themselves. They appeared to be contented, and deserve great credit for the pluck with which they face adversity. Once more the green crops gladdened the eye on the land that was converted into a desert during the war. The population has endured great losses, but one must bear in mind the extraordinarily recuperative capacity of this country and its people. In the great drought of some years back nearly all the sheep perished. There were those who then thought that the country was permanently ruined, but within a few years it had completely re-

covered. 'In five years,' said a Dutch farmer to me, 'it will be as if the war had never been.'

My transport rider knew this countryside well. He pointed out to me the scenes of the various small fights, in some of which he had taken part, and told me the story of many a ruined farm as we passed it. In the course of our second day's journey he directed my attention to a fine field of ripening wheat. He told me that the Boer farmer had sown his wheat in the autumn of 1899, at the beginning of the war, and had been absent from the farm on commando and as prisoner of war ever since. In the meanwhile the wheat had been growing wild, and had been reproducing itself for three years—an extraordinary thing, for one would have supposed that it must have been eaten down by our troop horses on more than one occasion. Some days later I met the present owner of the farm, Mr. Dewar, a Scotsman, who served with Lovat's Scouts. He had recently purchased the farm and corroborated the story of the wheat field. My transport rider knew most of the small farmers on the road; so often during our midday halts I used to visit some neighbouring farm with him, and was invariably welcomed in hearty fashion.

On the road itself we passed but few white people. The transport rider told me that the farmers were staying on their farms at present, as there were so few horses and mules with which to travel about. But of Basutos there were plenty on the way, and all were travelling in the same direction. These were men who had been working on the diamond mines at Kimberley or Jagersfontein, and were now walking gaily homewards carrying their bundles on their shoulders, with plenty of money in their belts and well provided with gaudy cloth and trinkets, which they were taking to

the girls of their choice in their native kraals. They were variously attired. Some were in khaki and putties, others with scarlet blankets rolled about them, and many wore the plumed hats of the irregular corps that had been raised in the course of the war. Some also protected their black faces from the sun's rays with patriotic parasols, whose sections were coloured red, white, and blue alternately. As they trudged by on foot they exchanged jests with our own Basuto boys.

The change that has come over the manners of the native of late is startling, not to say ominous. The Kaffir seems to have lost his former respect for the white man, even for his once firm master the Boer. Thus the transport riders with whom I was travelling had generally to repeat an order twice or thrice before it was unwillingly obeyed by their independent and insolent black followers. These boys sometimes flatly refused to do what they were told, and laughed in the faces of their employers, who dared not punish them, as the rascals would as likely as not have, without a word, deserted the waggons in the middle of the veldt. During the war the military authorities, perhaps of necessity, greatly overpaid the natives for their services as drivers or what not, and this has spoiled them for a long time to come, so that the farmers find considerable difficulty in obtaining labour.

Throughout South Africa the black man has now developed 'swollen head,' and many think that trouble is brewing. One hopeful feature of the situation is that recently the black has acquired an inordinate taste for smart European clothing for himself and finery for his womenfolk, so that when he has wasted his earnings and lootings of the war he will have to work again in order to procure money to satisfy his ever-increasing

wants. In Aliwal of a Sunday I used to see the gorgeously arrayed Kaffir beaux taking out their black young ladies dressed much as you will see some of our own girls in summer time in the popular C'ockney watering places—white frocks, stockings, shoes, and gloves, gaudiest of flowery picture hats, and parasols to match. In Basutoland itself at the wedding of a wealthy pair it is not unusual to see the bridegroom in smart frock coat, coloured waistcoat, patent leather shoes, lavender kid gloves, with a flower in his button-hole, while the bride is in magnificent dress with long white train, and with the orthodox veil, orange blossoms, and bouquet. White men of both races now complain that the insolence of some of the Basutos is getting beyond all bounds. Thus some Basutos, trekking with their own waggons, recently outspanned close to a Dutch farmhouse near Wepener, and allowed their cattle to graze in the provision garden and among the young trees, where, of course, they could do considerable damage. The farmer was away, so his wife sent her small boy to drive the cattle out. The Basutos ill-used him, threatened to kill him, stole a quantity of vegetables, and, after inspanning several of the farmer's oxen with their own, decamped with them across the border.

Before the war the native had a wholesome respect for the sjambok of the Dutchman. Now he feels that he is under the protection of the sentimentalists at home, who understand not the black man nor the conditions of life which prevail here, but love to put their humanitarian theories into practice at the expense of the colonists. The black man has many good points, yet he is not a man and a brother, but a child and a savage. 'Spare the sjambok, spoil the nigger,' is not a motto that will commend itself to certain philanthropists,

but it represents the policy that is the most humane one in the long run. The Boers kept the natives in their proper place, but it is a mistake to suppose that they often treated them with deliberate cruelty. As far as my experience of the days before the war goes, the natives, as long as they behaved well, were kindly treated by their Dutch masters, and were very often attached to them. It is not firm discipline but the silly pampering of the black that may lead to future trouble and bloodshed. Often now, when an insubordinate native is rebuked or threatened by a Dutchman, he insults and defies him. 'You Dutch are nobodies now,' he will cry out; 'the British have beaten you. You are no better than us. You are slaves. You dare not touch us now; the British will protect us.'

The natives show as little civility to the British. Now that martial law has been suspended the military authorities, having no power to flog, have a good deal of difficulty in keeping in order their black transport men, who in many cases show an inclination to assault white men on the smallest provocation. It seems somewhat anomalous, by the way, that we should have here a disarmed white population, while a few miles across the Basuto border there is a formidable native nation fully armed. It is estimated that thirty thousand of the Basuto fighting men are supplied with serviceable modern rifles. While I am on this subject I may mention that there is a very mischievous body of men now travelling up and down South Africa. I have heard much of these people, but so far have not come across any of them. These are coal-black American negroes, the emissaries of some coloured missionary society in the United States. They are wandering among the natives here, preaching to them that they are the equals

of the white men if not their betters, that the land rightly belongs to the natives, and that it is they who should be the lords of it. The ignorant Kaffirs, I am told, are much impressed by the teaching of these educated men, whose skins are so much blacker than their own.

CHAPTER VII

THE WASTE OF WAR RUINED ROUXVILLE—THE 'BYWONER'—REPATRIATION
COMMISSIONS FELLING OF THE ORANGE RIVER COLONY BOERS—BOER
OPINION OF LORD MILNER A 'BYWONER'S' FARM FORTITUDE OF RUINED
BOERS—THE FIGHT AT BUSHMAN'S KOP END OF THE TREK.

ON our second day out from Aliwal we halted as usual during the heat of noon, and from the waggons we looked out on what was a very typical scene of this wasted land. We were outspanned near the bank of a spruit, at times a raging torrent, but now quite dry save for a few small scattered pools left by the last rains, whose hot, almost opaquely-brown water was all we had to drink. But, untempting though it was to the eye, it was quite palatable, especially after it had been cooled in our canvas bottles, and it was no doubt perfectly wholesome, as most water is on the open veldt except in time of war. At some distance beyond the spruit stretched one of those long rocky ridges that the Boers knew so well how to defend. At the foot of the ridge was a ruined farmhouse set among trees, and not far from it was a heap of fallen bricks that before the war had been a large flour mill. The flat veldt between us and the ridge was intersected by broken fences of entangled wire and strewn with the skeletons of cattle, while it sparkled all over with the innumerable flashing reflections from the empty tins that had contained our soldiers' rations. There was no cultivation, and not a human being nor a living beast in sight. Nothing more utterly desolate or more eloquent of the waste of war

could be imagined. But later in the afternoon, before we inspanned, our eyes gazed on a clear sign of the return of peace and of hope for the devastated land. First we perceived in the direction from which we had come a great cloud of dust rising. Gradually it neared us, and we heard from out of it the sound of multitudinous bleating. Then the sheep themselves appeared in view, some thousands of them, which when they came to the edge of the spruit threw themselves eagerly down the slopes in search of water. Then the great mob passed us, and, driven by the Kaffir boys, swept on across the veldt towards the north-east. A mounted Dutchman was in charge of the sheep, which he told us had been purchased in the Cape Colony by several large farmers of the district, who were about to restock their farms with them.

The same evening's trek brought us to the one village between Alwal and Wepener, a distance of eighty-four miles by the waggon road. This was ill-fated Rouxville, a prosperous little place before the war, having a white population of about five hundred souls. The district of which it is the centre supplied a commando to Olivier's force at the beginning of the conflict. The burghers surrendered and took the oath of allegiance under Lord Roberts's protection proclamation in March 1900, but proved faithless, and again fought against us. Thrice was the district thoroughly cleared by our columns, and the village was practically destroyed. I saw but little of Rouxville; for we passed through it in the midst of a terrific thunderstorm, accompanied by torrential rain. It was only a little after nine o'clock at night, but the inhabitants had apparently gone to bed. Not a light was visible in the windows, and in the darkness of the storm, as our waggons

lumbered down the empty streets, I could merely distinguish the ruined houses on both sides of me looming dimly through the driving rain. The rain continued to pour throughout the night, and so foul was the weather that we did not inspan as usual at two o'clock, but remained about three hundred yards outside the village until dawn, with the waggons snugly covered in with their canvas 'sails,' trembling violently in the howling gale. At dawn the sky cleared, and we proceeded on our journey. While the waggons were inspanning I walked into the slumbering village and found that, though some of the houses had been rebuilt, many were still in ruins, the rooms emptied of furniture, the roofs, doors, and windows gone. I met no one, and, though I had with me a letter of introduction to one of the leading inhabitants, I did not present it, as he might have considered five o'clock in the morning an inconvenient hour to be called on by a stranger.

As we trekked along, my friend the transport rider told me what he knew of the owners of the various farms we passed. Some were back cultivating their land, others were dead, some had not yet returned from the prison camps; and of these last there were, he said, a few who would come back to find wife or children dead as well as farms destroyed. He told me his own story. First he served with Olivier, then with De Wet, and took part in several fights. Ultimately he surrendered with Prinsloo's force at Fouriesburg and was sent as a prisoner of war to Simonstown. He was a 'bywoner,' and before the war had been one of that numerous class of fairly well-to-do Boers who own cattle but have no land of their own, renting what they require from some large farmer. According to the usual arrangement, the 'bywoner' builds his house and farms

a given section of the land. In consideration of this right he gives a proportion, often a third, of his produce to the farmer. He also does a certain amount of work for the farmer, such as ploughing and fence-repairing, for which he is paid wages. The large farmers recognise the benefit that accrues to them from having some steady, hardworking 'bywoners' settled on their lands. This man occupied land on a farm near the Basuto border. While he was on commando our troops carried off his cattle, sheep, horses, waggons, and grain. Everything in his house was destroyed. He came back from prison to find that he had lost everything he had in the world. He was now beginning life again at forty as a transport rider with a waggon and a team of oxen, which a friend had let him have on credit, as his sole possessions. Of our five waggons, one alone belonged to him, and he was merely in charge of the others. Like most of these philosophic people, he was not in the least cast down about his losses, and looked forward with quiet confidence to his future.

After leaving Rouxville we passed through a richer country than any I had yet seen, rolling pasture-lands alternating with large tracts of fertile soil under cultivation. The farmers hereabouts are men of wealth, and as soon as they were released from the prison camps they restocked their farms and resumed cultivation, some of those who possessed three farms or more selling one so as to purchase cattle to restock the others. In this part of the country there had been little rain of late, and the abundant grass, taller than we had hitherto seen it and in full flower, was getting yellow. Still, the great fields of mealies over which one looked from the heights were of a rich green, in striking contrast with the surrounding veldt, for there was a sufficiency of water

for irrigation purposes and the extensive dams all seemed to be pretty full. As we travelled on we could see on our right hand, not many miles off, a rugged blue mountain range running parallel to our route—the hills whose summits form the Basutoland border.

I had talks with many a Dutch farmer, 'bywoner,' and transport rider whom we met on the road. They were all very friendly, and all wanted to know if I could give them any information as to what they were likely to get out of the Repatriation Fund. I was unable to enlighten them, and, as a matter of fact, I doubt if anyone could do so at that time. With regard to the immediate assistance that was being given by the Repatriation Board, it puzzled the people to find that different rules prevailed in different districts. Thus, in one district, they pointed out, a poor man received help at once, while in another nothing was advanced to him unless he could get some farmer or man of means to stand security for him. As I have already explained, the instructions issued to the Commissioners allowed them a wide discretion, and it is true that each district worked on its own method. Of course this had its advantage over a hard-and-fast system, as all local conditions could be taken into consideration, but not unnaturally the irregularity of it sorely perplexed the simple Boer.

All the small farmers and 'bywoners' with whom I conversed made the same complaint, and it was one that would have surprised some of our British Pro-Boers to hear. They complained that there were Dutchmen on the Repatriation Commissions, whereas the bulk of the people would have far preferred to have British Commissioners alone to decide their claims. These Dutchmen on the board, they went on to explain, often be-

longed to a class which they could no longer trust—the rich farmers who had done their utmost to urge an unwilling people to war, and who, as soon as they saw things going badly with the Boers, retired into Basutoland with their cattle, leaving the landless and other poor burghers in the lurch. The poor burghers bore the brunt of the fighting, fought to the end of the war, or were taken prisoners and lost all they possessed, while the rich farmers had now come back with their cattle, were practically as rich as ever, and were given remunerative Government posts. My informants also accused the Dutch Commissioners of favouring their own friends and snubbing other poor applicants for assistance. Such was the story which I heard on all sides, and from what I have heard since from British sources I imagine that it is not without some foundation.

That the Dutch Commissioners in some of the districts may be addicted to favouritism is quite probable. Fairness is not exactly a characteristic virtue of the Dutch. Here is a case in point which came before my notice. The Free State Government, long before the war, supplied a threshing machine, on certain terms, to a district for the use of the farmers. The official in charge of the machine lent it first to his own friends, and if one were not at least a friend of a friend of his one had small chance of ever getting the use of it. On the other hand, it may be argued that were a Repatriation Commission composed of none but British it would be the more easily taken in by dishonest claimants. There is no doubt that, taking Dutch character into account, the difficulty of sifting true claims from false, and of giving assistance to the really deserving alone, is so great that a board of Solons and Solomons would fail to be always just in its decisions. Nothing but a commission of incorruptible

thought-readers could carry out the work without falling into occasional error.

I had some interesting conversations with the Boers I met by the way, and soon began to understand to some extent the feeling of the people in this corner of the Orange River Colony, for be it remembered that they did not know what I was doing here, that a strange traveller on the road excites little curiosity in this nomadic country, and that, seeing that I was travelling with transport waggons, they probably put me down as quite a harmless person, who had no connection with officialdom, to whom they could open their minds freely. The following remarks made to me by a man with whom I had a long talk may prove of interest as showing the sort of opinions that are expressed by an ex-burgher of the Free State in these days when he converses with an Englishman. I was walking about a mile ahead of our waggons, which were slowly bumping along over a bad bit of road made of deep mud and high boulders, when I overtook the man, who was trekking with his waggon towards Wepener. We greeted each other as men do who meet in these lonely lands, and we walked together for a couple of miles or so while he discussed things in general. He told me that he owned a farm on the Basuto border and had lost all his stock in the war, and was transport riding until the Repatriation Board had looked into his claim and supplied him with cattle to go on with, as he fully expected it would soon do. He had no idea what the war was all about, but he had fought on commando for his Government. He liked and respected the British, and they, too, were in his opinion quite right in fighting like men for their Government, even if they did not know what the war was about. But he hated and would never forgive

those Transvaal and Free State Boers who had sided with the British and had fought against their Government and their own brothers.

The man estimated that there had been fifteen thousand Transvaal and Free State Boers who had taken up arms for Great Britain—an extensive overstatement, no doubt, but it is the theory of the Dutch, satisfying to their self-esteem, and De Wet supports it in his book, that we could never have beaten the Boers without Boer aid. He said that the poor Dutch farmers like himself would be quite loyal to the Government if it treated them justly. ‘We would, of course, like,’ he added, ‘to be under our own Government, but as it is fated that we are not to have that we prefer the British Government to any other. Those of us who have travelled tell us that other Governments allow no freedom to the poor people.’ I reminded him that some of the Boers had gone off to try German rule in Damaraland. ‘They did, but they soon trekked back again,’ he replied, laughing. ‘I do not like Germans. Few of us Dutch do.’

This man entertained the highest admiration for Mr. Chamberlain, and quoted with great approval something that he had said in one of his Natal speeches. The words were to the effect that the day would come when the British and the Dutch would be as one people in the land, racial differences having disappeared. The man made one remark worthy of attention. He had evidently been badly snubbed by some small jack-in-office, and deeply resented the affront. ‘If the British value the friendship of the Dutch,’ he said, ‘they should be careful not to appoint men like these. We are a sensitive people and cannot forget such things.’ Then he spoke of certain British com-

mandants with whom he had come in contact during the war ; they had been very firm, but at the same time courteous and tactful in carrying out their delicate duties, so that they had left nothing but pleasing memories behind them. He had recently received a letter from one of these officers, and he proudly showed it to me. A gentlemanly manner goes a long way with the proud Dutch, who, like the British colonists, cannot put up with 'side' and 'the insolence of office.' If you graciously as well as firmly refuse a favour to a Boer he will be much more your friend than if you grant it with supercilious manner. British Radicals would scarcely attribute to Lord Milner a gentleness to Dutch susceptibilities, but, as a matter of fact, he is much liked by the Boer farmers. As one of them put it to me, 'He meets one as man to man.' He has won their hearts by drinking coffee with them on their stoeps and chatting to them in the homely Taal. The Bond and its dupes of our Radical Party were crying for the expulsion of Lord Milner from South Africa, but the dupes do not understand that one of the Bond's chief reasons for having him out of the country is its fear of the esteem he has inspired in the Boers and the influence he is acquiring over them. Lord Milner's is the way to get on with the Dutch, and in this democratic country British officials who deal with the people as he does will do the Empire the best service.

On our fourth day out from Aliwal we outspanned in the morning near a ruined farm which was under the charge of one of the seven brothers of my transport rider. This man came down to the waggon to welcome us, bringing with him his three sturdy jolly boys, whose ages ranged from twelve to five. They had lived in the concentration camp and seemed to be none the worse

for it. They had evidently been very happy there, and made anxious inquiries from me about their teachers, of whom they had carried away grateful recollections. Their father told me that he had possessed six hundred sheep, sixty head of cattle, and several horses. He had lost all in the war. The Rouxville Repatriation Commission had allowed him eight oxen with which to begin ploughing. As he was a landless man and could offer no security himself, he had got the farmer whose land he occupied to give the Commissioners a bond for the value of the animals. He had brought a good deal of land under cultivation since his return from Ceylon, and he made us a very welcome present of some of the fine potatoes and onions which he had produced. Like all the farmers I met, he was hopeful of the future. These ruined Boers are certainly undismayed and dignified under disaster. They are never querulous. Few other peoples, I imagine, would display such fortitude and bear such heavy losses with so even a mind.

This same night we outspanned a few hundred yards outside Bushman's Kop, the one hamlet on the road between Rouxville and Wepener, if it can be called a hamlet, seeing that it contains but four houses--a store, a blacksmith's shop, an inn, and a small farmhouse--scattered over the veldt at some distance one from the other. It was Saturday, so it was decided that we should stay here nearly twenty-four hours, for the Dutchman, unless compelled to do so, will not trek on Sunday. The next morning after coffee the transport riders held a very long service together, the eldest reading the prayers from the Dutch Prayer-book and all joining in the singing of the Psalms. Then followed a luxurious Sunday dinner; for we had the potatoes and onions, that had been given to us on the preceding

day, to eat with our leathery biltong, the first vegetables we had tasted since leaving Aliwal.

There was a small fight at Bushman's Kop during the war, and the empty Lee-Metford and Mauser cartridges and exploded shells strewing the ground round our waggons testified to the fact. Here the Boers vainly attempted to check Brabant's troops, who were marching to the relief of besieged Wepener. My transport rider took part in the fight, which he clearly described to me, pointing out all the positions held by the British and the enemy. He admitted that the Boers did not fight as well as usual on this occasion.

Several men from the neighbourhood—that is, from anywhere within twenty miles of the place—rode in, and during the scorching afternoon, as we lay under the shadow of the waggons, farmers, cattle speculators, and others took coffee with us, and chatted on the price of animals, the diminishing profits of transport riding, and, of course, the puzzling question of repatriation claims. I walked up to the little four-house settlement. I found that the store had been fired and that the walls had fallen in, while every one of the buildings had been gutted, all woodwork having been carried off for fuel by the troops. But workmen had been rebuilding and repairing, and some of the rooms in each house were inhabited. In the store I met two young British farmers, the only fellow-countrymen I came across during my six days on the road. One of these had purchased his farm under the land settlement scheme.

Some Dutch farmers came into the store while I was there and cordially greeted the Englishmen, who happened to be their neighbours. I could see that these Britons and Boers were on the best of terms. When I mentioned that I had been travelling in the Cape Colony

one of the Englishmen asked me if I had not observed a complete difference in the attitude and the demeanour of the inhabitants as soon as I had crossed the border. Indeed I had observed it, for no bitterness had I detected among the Dutch since I had been in this colony, for happily there was no Bond here to foment discord. I even heard one Boer of this district curse the Bond as the chief cause of the war and of the people's ruin, a sentiment which would have been regarded as rank blasphemy south of the Orange River.

It looked like rain, and my transport rider was anxious to cross two deep spruits ahead of us before it fell, so in the evening we inspanned and made a short trek. We passed the spruits, and at nine o'clock outspanned again on the open veldt in air oppressively hot and still. But soon the threatening storm broke; a sudden fierce wind swept down on us, the sky became as ink, and then once again for several hours the waggons groaned and shook in the howling gale, while the rain fell in sheets, the loud thunder pealed, and occasional vivid forks of lightning clove the blackness of the heavens. But it was under a cloudless sky that we trekked again on the following day, and at dawn on the Tuesday morning our waggons crawled through the empty streets of Wepener to the place where they were to unload.

CHAPTER VIII

WEPENER—A WRECKED TOWN DISCHARGED SOLDIERY—HIGH COST OF
NECESSARIES FRIENDLY RELATIONS BETWEEN BRITONS AND BOERS—
THE MEN OF THE WHITE BUTION—HATRED OF THE NATIONAL SCOUTS
RETURNED PRISONERS OF WAR.

AFTER my six days' trek with waggons from Aliwal North I arrived at Wepener at daybreak on January 13 and proceeded to the Pioneer Hotel, which, like all other buildings in the village, including the churches, had been a good deal knocked about by our troops. The brick-strewn ground showed that about half the structure had been razed. From the remainder all the woodwork had been removed, and every door and window in the rooms that had been made habitable was quite new and still unpainted. As from the hotel stoep I looked up the street at the scattered houses I saw that some had been destroyed and that all had been gutted, not one having escaped extensive damage. Tommy Atkins in his search for firewood and loot had displayed a complete impartiality, the stores and residences of our own countrymen having been treated no better than those of the Dutch. Very forlorn looked the empty street in the dim light, the ruined habitations peeping out of the double row of poplars and mimosas that swayed and sighed in the morning breeze. Later on, after slumbering Wepener had awakened, I found that still more serious had been the damage that did not meet the eye. Billiard tables, chests of drawers, wardrobes, and pianos had been used as firewood. The strong room

of the National Bank had been broken into, and the valuable furniture that had been stored there for security by customers of the bank had been destroyed. Appalling has been the waste of property in this region. The soldier cannot be blamed. His rations of raw meat were served out to him, and in this land, where wood is so scarce that even the posts of the farm fences are made of hewn stone, he had to take what fuel he could get or eat his mutton uncooked. The only trees in the country are those that have been planted to surround the farms or border the township streets. Fortunately, Tommy discovered that most of these green trees—the sappy willow, for example—were useless for the purposes of fuel, otherwise not one would have been left standing.

Wepener is a village of about six hundred inhabitants, only two miles from the Basutoland border. Being near the bridge that spans the Caledon River and at the junction of roads leading to Aliwal, to Bloemfontein, to Ladybrand, and to Mafeteng in Basutoland, it has become an important centre of trade, especially with Basutoland. It is the centre also of a fairly good farming district, and that its inhabitants anticipate a prosperous future for it on the completion of the railway which is to bring it into communication with Bloemfontein and Ladybrand was shown by the high prices that were offered at an auction for some township stands during my stay. The recuperative power displayed by this country after so long and devastating a war excites one's amazement and admiration. The colonist, whether British or Boer, is not the man to cry over spilt milk, and, though he may have endured the heaviest losses, he looks forward with confidence towards re-establishing himself in the near future.

Wepener during the war had a worse experience than most of the neighbouring townships, for these were for some time occupied by our troops, which meant that a good deal of money was circulated to the advantage of the inhabitants, and this was some compensation for the destruction of their property. But Wepener was unoccupied for eighteen months after the evacuation, and was left to the mercy of the raiding Boer commandos and the British columns that swept over the district in the course of their 'drives.' The devastation was apparently complete, and yet now in the little village I found everyone cheery, hopeful, apparently well to do, with plenty of ready money to spend, and, though it was only seven months since the Treaty of Peace had been signed, the inhabitants had set to work so earnestly that already a great deal had been done towards making good the ravages of war. The rebuilding or repairing of the houses was rapidly progressing, and would have been carried through before had it not been that the necessary masons, carpenters, and other artisans were not forthcoming. But shortly before my arrival a number of the workmen who are at present wandering from wrecked village to wrecked village all over the colony, where their services are very much in demand, entered an appearance in Wepener and at once obtained employment, there being even a competition for their engagement among the many people who were anxious to have their habitations put in order again as soon as possible.

With the exception of a few, the workmen who had come into Wepener were British soldiers who had recently taken their discharge in South Africa. There were, it seems, some good masons and bricklayers in the ranks of the Highland Light Infantry, the Northum-

berland Fusiliers, and other regiments that fought in the war, and here they now were repairing the houses of the ex-burghers of the Free State which possibly they themselves had assisted to wreck. They commanded a wage of £1 a day for by no means too many hours' work out of the twenty-four. The men appeared scarcely to realise that they would not permanently enjoy this extraordinary prosperity, and that when conditions became normal in the country their position would be very different. Before the war the average wages paid to skilled masons were under 10s. a day.

The discharged soldiers, after nearly three years of fighting, strict discipline, and hardship, hardly knew what to make of their sudden new conditions of liberty, luxury, and plentiful money. They were not unnaturally apt for a time to run riot a little in this working-man's paradise. Despite the enormous prices that prevail here, the men were to be seen thronging the bars at all hours of the day, arguing in every dialect of the British Isles, from Cockney to the Highland tongue, and not infrequently going outside to settle their little disputes with their fists, for here a man's coat comes off on very slight provocation. But with all this the work was accomplished, and throughout each week-day the war-torn town, rapidly rising from its ruins, was ringing with the sound of hammer and saw and the clang of beaten metal. A wage of £1 a day sounds well, but the average discharged soldier working in Wepener saved nothing out of it. This is a thirsty land, and after toiling in the sun Tommy likes his beer, but a bottle of English beer cost half a crown, a small bottle of inferior lager eighteenpence, and a dram of any sort of spirit one shilling. The teetotaller

was no better off, for he had to pay a shilling, in some places eighteenpence, for his bottle of gingerbeer. If a man avoided the bar altogether and went to the spruit for water he was likely to contract enteric. He could not boil his drinking water—if to take such a precaution would ever occur to a Tommy—for there was no fuel to be found, and in time of peace he is not permitted to use grand pianos for this purpose.

It is not merely luxuries that are so dear—the necessities of life have also greatly risen in price since the war. When our successive columns swept this region they not merely destroyed all the grain, but killed all cattle, sheep, horses, and mules, lest these should fall into the enemy's hands. (One column alone slaughtered sixty thousand sheep. There are spots on the veldt which were unapproachable for weeks on account of the stench that came from the innumerable carcasses. There are kraals in which the bones of sheep are now lying three feet deep.

It will be long before the country can be restocked, and in the meanwhile prices of all animals range very high. A man arrived at Wepener while I was there with a number of sheep for sale. He asked 27s. apiece for them, and most of them were small animals, which, as my landlord pointed out to me, would not supply much more than 20lb. of meat each. A trek ox that used to be worth £6 now costs £16 or £18, and so denuded is the district, not merely of oxen but of horses and mules, that transport by road is difficult to procure, and is often excessively expensive. A friend and I, for instance, wished to hire a mule cart to take us to Bloemfontein, which is under seventy miles from Wepener. The road is good, so that the journey could be covered in a day. We were told that the usual charge made at

present would be £18, but we found a man willing to carry us and our baggage for somewhat less.

The following are some figures that will exemplify the cost of transport: A 200 lb. sack of coal is worth about 1s. 9d. in Natal, but in Bethlehem it is sold for 16s., the difference of price being chiefly represented by the cost of transport by waggon, over fifty-six miles of road, from the railway terminus at Harrismith. Thus the further one is from the railway the dearer all commodities become, and I cannot recommend Wepener as a town to which one should come in order to economise.

The Dutch form the majority of the inhabitants of Wepener, and of those of British blood a large proportion were burghers of the Orange Free State, some having held official posts, the principal Basutoland trader, for example, Mr. Fraser, a Scotsman, having been landdrost of the town when war broke out. Under the liberal laws of the late Republic our countrymen gladly availed themselves of the privilege of the franchise, on taking an oath of allegiance, which did not compel them to renounce their British nationality. The equality of the races was recognised. British and Boer burghers respected and trusted each other and lived together in amity, as the two peoples did in no other part of South Africa. Here one began to realise that the reconciliation of the two races was not a dream, and caught a glimpse of what the whole country may be like in the future, provided we do not weakly pander to the prejudices of the politicians who foment discord and the fanatical churches that preach hate.

The British burghers were in a difficult position at the outbreak of war; for, while their sympathies were with Great Britain, they could not help being at the

same time loyal and grateful to their adopted country, that had always treated them well. Those I know in Wepener took the only course that was possible to them in the circumstances. They refused to go on commando to fight their fellow-countrymen, and at the same time they did not take up arms against their fellow-burghers. They took the oath of neutrality under Lord Roberts's proclamation, and took no part in the war. Now that the conflict is over they appear to be on the best of terms with their former Dutch friends, who appreciate the motives that directed their conduct. Here one detects no signs of racial bitterness. One hears nothing of boycotting. British and Boers work together in harmony. Here the British and the Dutch are not for ever speaking ill of each other and misjudging one another, as is the case everywhere in the Cape Colony, where Dutch irreconcilability invites British resentment. There are but two hotels in Wepener. The Frontier Hotel, in which I stayed, is kept by a young Australian, who came out here to fight for us with the Queensland troopers. The other is kept by a jolly old Dutchman who fought against us, was our prisoner of war in the Bermudas, visited London before his return, and talks amusingly of his experiences. In most of the small Cape townships with which I am acquainted these two inns would have been rival camps. All the British would have patronised the one house and all the Boers the other. But it is not so here. As many Dutch as British frequent the British hotel, and as many British as Dutch stand round the old Boer's bar.

During my trek from the Orange River and in every place I visited in the colony I found these satisfactory relations existing between the two races. I observed

no bitterness on either side. It is curious to find simple veldt Boers apparently even developing a loyalty and pride in their new citizenship. In the course of conversation they inquire of you concerning the King's health, and ask you to give them in exchange for an old coin a new one 'with his Majesty's portrait on it, so that we can see what he is like.' They are grateful to the monarch, for they believe that it was he who gave the Boers such easy terms when the peace was arranged.

The general feeling everywhere was practically as I have described it. Of course, there were exceptions. In the Bethlehem district, for example, there was a section of the community that was 'talking large' about compelling the British to withdraw from the country unless the burghers were permitted at once to control again all their own affairs just as before the war. Now, though the men who entertained such premature aspirations after Home Rule were on commando throughout the war, they did very little fighting and suffered no loss, for they took their cattle and other possessions to the mountain fastnesses that lie to the south of this district, on the Basutoland border, and there remained in safety, occasionally harassing our columns and falling on convoys, but running few risks. The British had organised a big 'drive' into the mountains that would have taught these people a lesson. All was prepared, and our forces were just converging on their objective to deliver the blow when the Treaty of Peace was signed. So the men in the mountains escaped and returned to their farms round Bethlehem richer than they had been before the war, for they brought in with them not only their own cattle but stray oxen belonging to others which they had 'jumped' on the way. These

men when they came in took to wearing 'the white button' on their left breasts—the badge that distinguishes those who fought to the end from those who surrendered or were taken prisoners. Some secret committee apparently controls the right to wear this badge, for I am told that an exception to the rule has been made in favour of those who were taken prisoners with Cronjé, who can now display the 'white button,' whereas those who surrendered with Prinsloo, for example, are not entitled to do so.

The 'white button' and its accompanying 'tall talk' do not find favour with the bulk of the population. They take offence at a distinction which seems to reflect on their own courage. I hear that the use of the button is gradually falling off, as public opinion is against it, and that the 'tall talk,' meeting with little sympathy, is not so much heard as it was some months ago. In the Cape Colony I found that the bitterest feeling was displayed by those to whom the war had never been brought home, and who suffered nothing. So it is here. It would seem that it is with two sturdy races as with two plucky dogs that quarrel whenever they meet. If you separate them on each occasion before it has been decided which is the better animal they will fight over and over again and never make it up. But if you allow them to fight it right out until one or both lie down and can struggle no more they will be the best of friends for the future.

The people in this part of the country not unnaturally found it difficult to forgive the National Scouts and other Boers who fought on our side in the war. But, as far as I can hear, there was nothing approaching to the cruel boycotting of the loyal Dutch that prevails in the Cape Colony, where no possible justi-

fication can be found for it, seeing that the Cape Dutch who helped us were but acting loyally to the Government under which they were born. Here, too, sometimes, recently returned prisoners of war from Ceylon or St. Helena, before they quite realised the situation, mounted the high horse and attempted to bully the 'hands-uppers.' But they soon found their level, as the majority of the Dutch, at any rate in this part of the Orange River Colony, have had enough of strife and are anxious that all angry feeling should now subside. Some returned prisoners coolly settled on deserted farms, and there ploughed and sowed and grazed such cattle as they could pick up. A farmer near Wepener recently returned to find one of the gentlemen from Ceylon in possession of his farm. The intruder refused to surrender the place to him, and made out an ingenious case for himself, fortified with imaginary law and still more imaginary evidence. The owner at last had to apply for assistance to the Resident Magistrate, who sent two men of the South African Constabulary to the farm to eject the man. I believe that the farms of men who were killed in the war are not infrequently 'jumped' in this manner.

CHAPTER IX

THE DEFENCE OF WEPENER—THE JAMMERSBERG ENTRENCHMENTS—WORK OF THE REPATRIATION BOARD—RELIEF WORKS—COMPENSATION PROBLEMS—THE PROTECTION PROCLAMATION—ACROSS THE VELDT TO BLOEMFONTEIN—IN DE WET'S COUNTRY—THE BRITISH REVERSE AT DEKWETSDORP.

THE defence of Wepener in April 1900 was an incident of the war of which all the British people may justly feel proud, reflecting as it does the greatest credit on the soldierly qualities of our irregular South African corps, in whose ranks, by the way, home-born and Colonial British are to be found in about equal number. The terms generally employed in the description of the defence are somewhat misleading. There was no siege or defence of Wepener itself. It was quite an untenable position, so the small British force abandoned the town to the Boers as soon as they were seen approaching. Our men occupied a strong and admirably-chosen position three miles away, on the further side of the Caledon River, which they defended with great gallantry, against a Boer force more than four times as large as their own, for seventeen days until relief came. The investing Boer force consisted of about eight thousand men; while the British, who formed part of General Brabant's Division, numbered only seventeen hundred, including men of Brabant's Horse, the Cape Mounted Rifles, the Kaffrarian Horse, some Royal Engineers, and a company of the Royal Scots. Both sides were

well supplied with artillery, and the Boers succeeded in getting some guns up to the top of the steep Jammersberg, or Hill of Sorrow, which commanded the British camp. For seventeen days with shell and rifle fire the Boers in vain assailed the British positions. At first they delivered furious attacks both by day and by night. On one occasion they temporarily drove back the British from one portion of their defences ; while at another time a Boer storming party crept up a deep nullah from the Caledon that brought it unperceived close under the British trenches. The Boers charged home resolutely, but were repulsed with heavy loss. And all this time, about two miles away, were drawn up along the Basuto border, just within the fence which forms the boundary, some thousands of Basuto warriors, mounted and armed with rifles, watching the turn of events and ready to prevent any violation of Basuto territory by the Boers. The Boers must have lost many men while making these assaults on the British positions. Our casualties amounted to about three hundred killed and wounded. At last, after seventeen days of bombardment, the Boers suddenly raised the siege and disappeared, just in time to avoid the hemming in and destruction of their force by the converging columns of Brabant, Chermshire, and Rundle, who were advancing to the relief of the besieged.

One morning a friend drove me to the scene of the memorable defence. We followed the bank of the now almost dry Wepener spruit to its outlet into the mightier, ever-flowing Caledon River, down whose rugged bed a great body of water was rushing, the outpourings from many a gorge in the high Basuto mountains. We now saw before us on the further side of the river the heights that were held by the British. On either bank of the

river were standing what remain of the large flour mills belonging to Mr. Robertson, and on the further shore was his pleasant house, surrounded by groves and gardens. A great weir has here been thrown across the river, and from the two ends of it canals, that have been cut out of the rock, carry the water to the turbines that work the mills. The present aspect of these mills brings home to the spectator the merciless waste of war. Essential portions of the machinery, that could not be replaced, had been removed, so as to make it impossible for the Boers to work the mills should they attempt to do so. Instructions had been sent from headquarters, however, to all British columns that were clearing the country that these mills must be spared. But one of our patrols, no doubt in ignorance of the order, fired the mills, and the wanton act caused the destruction of, I believe, upwards of £60,000 worth of property, including the costly machinery, the buildings, and thirty thousand sacks of grain. It was, of course, of importance that the grain should not be left to fall into the hands of the Boers, but, as there was plenty of transport, in the shape of waggons and oxen, available, this might easily have been carried across the border into the neutral Basuto territory, where it would have been quite safe. Mr. Robertson is a Scotsman who was a burgher of the Free State ; but that he was also an intensely loyal friend of Great Britain was well known. Relying on Lord Roberts's protection proclamation, he took the oath of neutrality and went on with his business at the mills at a time when this portion of the country may be justly described as having been in a condition of profound peace, no one for a moment expecting that the devastating wave of war would yet again and again roll over it.

We crossed the fine iron bridge which spans the Caledon, and Mr. Robertson rode with us over the ground, pointing out the British and Boer positions and the points at which the enemy made their assaults, the whole story of the siege and the defence being thus made clear to us on the spot. First he showed us, near his house, the little cemetery where our dead soldiers are buried, the stone monuments that have been sent by their relatives standing at the head of several of the graves. Then we clambered up the ridges that form the Jammersberg positions, to give them their more correct name. One could understand, as one obtained a comprehensive view of the surrounding country from the summit of a lofty kopje, why this strong position had been chosen for the resolute stand of the little force. It was necessary, so as to avoid being commanded by the enemy, to occupy a great extent of ground. The main positions may be described as a line of stony ridges, bordering the river for some distance, and then sweeping round inland so as to form a hilly horseshoe enclosing an expanse of grass-grown veldt. The circuit of this horseshoe is said to be eight miles, a long line of defences indeed to be held by a force of only seventeen hundred men against eight thousand. The dispositions for the defence had been admirably made by the late Major C. Maxwell, R.E., in whom his country lost a most valuable officer, and as we followed the ridges we saw the trenches, sangars, and rifle pits, which had been constructed at his orders, the empty cartridges that lay thickly in front of each of them testifying to the vigour of the defence. The British entrenchments, too, lined the river bank, and at Jammersberg, fortunately, our men had a sufficiency of water as well as of food and ammunition, so that

there was never a question of surrender, and they were enabled to withstand for an indefinite time all the assaults that the Boers could deliver.

When I arrived at Wepener I found that a Repatriation Commission had for some time been sitting there with the resident magistrate, Mr. Harley, as its chairman. In this district the work of repatriation had been carried out with despatch, and with few exceptions the farmers were now back on their lands. I have already explained that different methods of conducting the repatriation prevailed in different districts. The following was the system adopted by the Wepener Commission. Men of large means received no assistance. Had all they asked been advanced to some of the applicants, there would have been nothing left for the relief of the really poor burghers. Thus a man who owned several large farms, but was loth to raise money by selling any portion of his land, applied to the district commission for a loan of £8,000, on the security of his property, to enable him to restock his farms, the loan of course to be on the stated Government terms, that is, to be free of interest for two years and bearing only 3 per cent. afterwards. I need scarcely say that his application was not entertained. It was only to those who had no capital or no adequate borrowing powers that the board made these advances, and then it did it in kind rather than in cash. In the same way, when the board was selling horses and stock at cost price, the richer farmers would have quickly bought them all up for cash as a speculation had not the Commissioners put a check on the sale and seen to it that the smaller men who had no ready money had an opportunity of purchasing on credit, on giving security. In this district the farmer, on the average, had

stock and supplies to the value of about £400 advanced to him.¹

By Article 10 of the Terms of Surrender the British Government undertook that the people of the two conquered Republics should be helped to reoccupy their farms. The Repatriation Board had already been established by Lord Milner two months before the conclusion of peace, its work being then confined to the collection of statistics showing the number of people to be repatriated, the extent of their losses, and so forth. Later on, when peace made it possible to do so, the resident magistrates undertook tours through their respective districts, and sent in reports on the condition of the country and the needs of those who were to be repatriated. The way having been thus prepared for it, the board began its operations in June 1902. First, the people, whether they came from the concentration camps or were returned prisoners of war, were transported as rapidly as possible to their respective districts, and replaced on their farms if they belonged to the farming class. In the meanwhile the district commissioners had made all ready for the return of the repatriated. They had made large purchases in the Cape Colony and elsewhere of horses, cattle, and sheep, with which to restock these denuded regions. They had also bought seed potatoes, seed wheat, oats, and mealies as well as seed vegetables. They had likewise purchased farming implements, and had bought

¹ This account of the repatriation work in the Orange River Colony was written in Wepener on January 20 last. It will show how much had already been done by that date and what were the problems then perplexing both the administrators of the fund and the relieved—problems which, as I shall explain in subsequent chapters, have for the most part now been solved to the satisfaction of the majority of the people, if not to that of ex-General Botha and other agitators whose obvious aim is the embarrassment of the Government.

at a cheap rate the sheds in the concentration camps and other building material. All these, as I have explained, they sold to the burghers at cost price, either for cash or on credit on the easy terms laid down by the Government.

Arrangements were also made for the supply of rations to the people as long as this was necessary. To prevent the able-bodied from drifting into pauperism relief works of a useful character have been instituted, 4s. 6d. a day being the fixed rate of wage. Over a thousand men are now being employed on the construction of great dams on the land settlement farms and on the construction of the Thabanchu Railway. The 'Bloemfontein Post' of January 10 gives the following estimate of the total result of the board's operations up to that date: Twelve thousand farmers and their families, that is, about sixty thousand persons, have been assisted and returned to their farms. Thirty-five thousand persons are now drawing rations. The value of the loans issued in cash is £8,500, and of those in kind some £219,000. About £1,000,000 worth of supplies have been issued. Eighty-five per cent. of the people have been already repatriated.

So much for the burghers who took up arms against us; but the loyalists are not being wholly neglected, and are receiving special assistance. Thus the Refugee Aid Department has been created, and British refugees are relieved out of the Mansion House Fund and the £50,000 voted by Parliament; while the Victoria League is also devoting the fund it has collected to the assistance of loyal refugees. In the Orange River Colony a Volunteer Repatriation Department has been established, whose object is the repatriation of and lending of assistance to the ex-burghers and British residents in the

Free State who joined any of the Imperial corps or assisted the British forces in any way during the war. Most of the British refugees have by this time returned to their homes in the two colonies.

The Repatriation Board has carried to practically a successful conclusion its vast and difficult work of reinstating the farmers; but it has still before it what is perhaps a more formidable and delicate task, for it has been decided that the department will have to deal with the whole complicated question of civil claims as distinguished from the military claims. The military authorities concern themselves only with claims for certain direct damages done by British columns and with the payment for the military requisitions for which officers have given or should have given proper receipts. But a large proportion of claims for destruction undoubtedly done by our troops have been disallowed by the military authorities and referred to the civil administration. The consideration of these civil claims and of all those for damages done by the Boers has been left to the Repatriation Commissioners. The questions to which no one can give an answer, not even the Commissioners, are as to what people are entitled to compensation, what proportion of the claims that are being sent in are likely to be paid, and where the money for the settlement of them is to come from. As far as the civil claims are concerned, the fund that will be available for distribution is presumably the balance that will be left of the three millions given by the British Government, after the expenses of the repatriation have been met. When the amount of this balance—if there is one—has been ascertained, will it be divided *pro rata* among those whose claims for compensation have been admitted? In that case, if the wealthy farmers

and storekeepers send in claims for all they have lost, the total claimed will so vastly exceed any sum that is likely to be set apart for the purpose that the poor landless people who have lost their all will receive as their share infinitesimal awards that can be of no service to them.

But the most difficult problem of all awaiting solution is one that is perturbing the minds of everyone in the country, whether he is affected by it or not, for it is realised that very grave issues are involved. Deputations of leading men from these districts were appointed to go to Bloemfontein to put the matter before Mr. Chamberlain. In March 1900, when it was fondly imagined that the war was over so far as this part of the country was concerned, Lord Roberts issued his memorable proclamation, in which he promised protection to the burghers who should lay down their arms, take the oath of neutrality, and remain on their farms. They were assured that if they did this they should not suffer in person or in goods. That proclamation was confirmed in the first 'Gazette' published in the Orange River Colony. In this part of the colony there were many farmers whose heart had never been in the war which their foolish Government had forced on them, so, relying on this promise of protection, they gladly availed themselves of the proclamation, surrendered, took the required oath, and returned contentedly and in fancied security to their farms and herds. But the happy anticipations were soon falsified. The war had by no means come to an end. There were yet to be two more years of fighting in this south-east corner of the Free State. Back soon swept the Boer commandos; and the farmers who had come in had a very bad time of it at the hands of their countrymen. Their

cattle and crops were commandeered, some of them were sjamboked, and some were carried away and tried for high treason by the Boers, while others were compelled to join a commando on pain of death. Then in their turn, not once, but twice or thrice, our own troops swept over the country, clearing it of every living animal they could find and destroying the scanty crops that had been raised by the people fearfully in the pauses of the war. The men who, trusting us, remained on their farms in vain pleaded the proclamation. Like their neighbours on commando, they lost everything but their bare land. Those who were staunch to us are well known, and indeed when De Wet last sent his emissaries to raise recruits in the district only ten 'bywoners' went out to join him. The surrendered farmers were ultimately taken to the refuge camps, where the wives of the men on commando heaped perpetual insults on them. In addition to having lost so much, they have for the last three years been subjected to all manner of indignities.

Now these unfortunate men maintain—and I find that most of the British here are with them—that, as they were guaranteed protection by Lord Roberts's proclamation, and acted faithfully in accordance with it, they are entitled to some special compensation for their losses. They explain to those with whom they discuss the matter that it is not the amount they will receive that chiefly concerns them. They declare that they will be quite content if they are paid but a small proportion of the value of what they have lost, but they consider—and they feel very strongly on the matter—that they should be put on a different footing from those who fought throughout the war against us, and who now throw it in their faces that after all the 'hands-

uppers' are no better off than those who went out on commando. It is claimed that these men should receive compensation before any distribution is made among the fighting Boers. There is no doubt that our neglect to act with justice in this case would rankle deeply in the minds of these people, and would be quoted all over the country, and for years to come, by our enemies, as yet another instance of Great Britain's breach of faith. It is a very old tradition in South Africa that Great Britain's pledges cannot be trusted. The non-fulfilment of a promise which the people understand to have been made in her name by her greatest and most chivalrous soldier would create the worst of impressions. I have heard it argued that these people would have lost their cattle and crops even if they had not acted on Lord Roberts's proclamation. This is no doubt the case; but the point is whether or not the words of the proclamation bind us in honour to compensate the farmers who relied on our protection. Moreover, is it good policy to abandon those who have given us assistance, as we are so generally, and sometimes with justice, accused of doing?

I hired a driver, a cart, and four good horses, and left Wepener in the afternoon of January 22 to drive seventy-four miles across the veldt to Bloemfontein. Having crossed the bridge that spans the Caledon at Jammersberg, we traversed a flat uninteresting-looking country, very parched after the prolonged drought, with no water in the spruits, and very little left in the dams. Every farmhouse we passed was in ruins. Not one had door, window, or roof, and some had collapsed in consequence of the removal of the supporting wood-work. Scarcely a fence either had been left standing. This road was often followed by our columns, and it is

now lined with the bones of the many transport animals that perished by the way, the whole veldt twinkling, too, with the thousands of empty meat tins that mark the path of the British Tommies.

We were now in De Wet's country, and several of the farms we passed—in ruins like the others—belong to him and to members of his family. We halted for the night in the village that bears his name, Dewetsdorp, a pretty little place of perhaps three hundred inhabitants. Here every house had been gutted and stripped of its woodwork. Over and over again British columns and Boer commandos passed through Dewetsdorp, and it will be remembered that this was the scene of one of our reverses. Here a British force of four hundred men surrendered to De Wet after seven days' investment. The British held a steep ridge that hems in the village on its west side, while the Boer guns were stationed on a kopje to the eastward of it. Dewetsdorp thus lay between the two fires, and people who remained in it during that week of constant fighting tell me that while the shells all passed over their heads the bullets from both sides plentifully peppered their houses. The Boers drew in closer day by day till at last a portion of the very extended British positions became untenable. But the defenders might possibly still have held on, as was the case at Wepener, until relief came, had it not been that their water supply was cut off, and the intolerable thirst made surrender necessary. It was a gallant defence, in the course of which we lost sixty killed and wounded. Sir A. Conan Doyle, in his 'History of the War,' tells us that of the eighteen men who served one of the British guns sixteen were killed or wounded, the last rounds being fired by the sergeant-farrier, who carried, loaded, and fired all by himself.

At four in the morning of January 23 we inspanned and resumed our journey across the burnt-up veldt. At last a long bank of dust on the horizon showed us where lay Bloemfontein ; and at midday, having passed the tented camps and the huge piles of military stores that lie outside the town, we drove into the broad straight streets of the capital of the Orange River Colony.

CHAPTER X

IN BLOEMFONTEIN—A LAND BOOM—SCOTCH EX-BURGHERS OF THE FREE STATE—BOER PREFERENCE FOR ENGLISH EDUCATION—BRITISH SETTLERS IN THE COLONY—WORK OF THE LAND SETTLEMENT BOARD—CONDITIONS OF TENURE—LAND SETTLEMENT IN THE CONQUERED TERRITORY.

It would amaze Herr Bloem, who gave his name to Bloemfontein, and the rough stone walls of whose farm are still standing in the grounds of the Lieutenant-Governor's residence, if he could revisit the glimpses of the moon and see what the town has now become. Before the war, though the capital of a prosperous Republic, it was a very quiet place. It was merely the chief market town of a purely farming district, with no din to disturb its broad garden-lined streets, save that caused by the weird cries of the drivers and the cracking of the whips, as the long teams of oxen slowly dragged into the spacious market-square the creaking waggons laden with the produce of the countryside. But now all that is changed. The slumberous days of good old Herr Bloem are no more, the spirit of progress is in the air, the streets of Bloemfontein present an animated appearance, new buildings are rising everywhere, trade is brisk, new stores are being established, there is a 'boom' in township lots, new waterworks are being constructed, and the unmistakable signs of advance and increasing prosperity meet one at every step. To add to the general liveliness there is the garrison, the white tents and the huts of whose camps are scattered over the rolling grass country that surrounds

the town. At the time of my visit the 2nd Worcesters, the 1st Gloucesters, and the South Wales Borderers represented our infantry in the district, the 20th Hussars our cavalry, and there was also a battery of Artillery. In the afternoon one military band or the other played in the market-square, which was then thronged with promenaders, of Dutch blood for the most part; for these did not sulk here as in the Cape, but maintained friendly relations with the British and joined in their amusements.

When walking through the streets of Bloemfontein one finds it difficult to realise that but a few months ago the two races were at war in this land. That it is, indeed, a conquered country is brought home to one only by the brand-new emblazonments of the British royal arms that have replaced the arms of the late Republic on the façades of the handsome public buildings. In the course of my cross-country trek from the Orange River I could detect no bitterness among the inhabitants, and I found that state of affairs prevailing in the capital. At the club the men of the two races met most amicably. There was no sharp cleavage of society into British and Dutch as in Cape Colony centres.

Many are the reasons one could adduce for the undoubted fact that the reconciliation of the two peoples has advanced further in this colony than in the others. In the first place there is no Bond here to breed dissension as in the Cape. The bulk of the people are better educated and less narrow-minded than the dwellers in the Transvaal, and they perhaps realise more fully than the Transvaal people that the British Government really wishes them well and can be trusted to look after their interests. Lord Milner, as Governor of both the new colonies, has disarmed the suspicion of the Dutch and



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inspired confidence. The Orange River Colony is fortunate in having, in Sir H. J. Goold-Adams, a Lieutenant-Governor who is an able and tactful administrator, who has long known South Africa and its people, is as popular with the Dutch as with the British, and whose personal influence has produced a very good effect. Like Lord Milner, he encourages the Boers to meet him half way, and to express their wishes and opinions, thereby assisting the Government in coming to a decision as to the best course to be taken.

Another influence tending to reconciliation is that of the many Free State ex-burghers of British blood, Scots for the most part, who were loyal to Great Britain while faithful to the country of their adoption, men of high standing and character, much respected by the Dutch community, who took a leading part in the government of the late Republic, and whose long-existing friendly relations with their Boer fellow-citizens have not been interrupted. Such a man is Mr. J. G. Fraser, once Chairman of the Volksraad and the member for Bloemfontein at the outbreak of the war. It was he who, with the Mayor and landdrost, tendered the submission of the capital to Lord Roberts, and later, with Piet de Wet, led the peace movement in the colony. Of him Sir A. Conan Doyle, in his history of the war, justly writes: 'Fraser, a sturdy, clear-headed Highlander, had been the one politician in the Free State who combined a perfect loyalty to his adopted country with a just appreciation of what a quarrel *à outrance* with the British Empire would mean. Had Fraser's views prevailed, the Orange Free State would still exist as a happy and independent State. As it is, he may help her to happiness and prosperity as the Prime Minister of the Orange River Colony.'

Mr. Fraser is now the chief of the civil members nominated to the Legislative Council of the new Crown Colony, and is the chairman of the Repatriation Board. In both capacities he is rendering most valuable service. His influence among the people is extraordinary, and while I was travelling through the country, had I not already heard of his career, I should have had to ask : ' And who is this Fraser of whom everyone is talking ? ' for constantly the ' bywoners ' and transport riders whom I met on the road used to bring up his name. It was Mr. Fraser had done this, or had said that, and so it must be good. If a man complained that the Commissioners would not listen to his claim for compensation I would hear his friends suggest that he should travel to Bloemfontein to see Mr. Fraser, who would put things right for him. The people regard him as their friend, and he is respected by both British and Dutch. It is the Frasers in South Africa and not the Spriggs who are bringing about the reconciliation of the races.

In Bloemfontein I met a leading Cape Dutch loyalist, who told me that things went quite well in his district immediately after the making of peace, all the people settling quietly down, and the rebels showing readiness to be on friendly terms with the loyalists. As soon as the meaning of Sir Gordon Sprigg's weak policy became manifest, however, as soon as the rebels understood that they had nothing to fear, and that, through his defection, the Bond was still master, they plucked up heart, reviled and boycotted the loyalists, and race feeling waxed as bitter as it had ever done before. How much brighter seems the prospect in the Orange River Colony, where the Imperial Government is admirably represented by able and patriotic administrators

and is supported by British and Dutch ex-burghers of the type of Mr. Fraser ! Let armchair Radical theorists at home ponder this. In the Cape Colony, where the Constitution, so sacred in their eyes, was not suspended, where the people, that is the Dutch, rule themselves and have it all their own way, there is universal discontent and the bitterest racial hatred ; whereas, in the Crown Colony, the two peoples work together in harmony, and serious disaffection appears to be all but non-existent.

The Free State Boers who were on our side in the war or who surrendered under a proclamation are so numerous that the severe boycotting of them, as carried on in the Cape, would not be altogether feasible. It is officially estimated that of the fifteen thousand males of fighting age in this colony two thousand four hundred directly took our part, that is, either took up arms for us or assisted our forces as scouts, guides, and in other capacities. Here is a sign of the times indicating that little really strong feeling can exist at present against the 'hands-uppers.' The people of Kroonstad met to elect the head of the deputation they were about to send to Bloemfontein to meet Mr. Chamberlain. The two candidates were General Christian De Wet himself, the soldier who held out to the end, and his brother Piet De Wet, the leader of the Peace Party during the later phases of the war, the advocate of surrender. Piet De Wet was elected by a considerable majority. It is another sign of the times that the bulk of the people now prefer that their children should receive their education in the English language. In the public schools, while the lessons are of course given in English, the Dutch language is taught for a certain number of hours a week to the children whose parents desire it.

At Wepener, when the school was opened, there was a full attendance of about two hundred and fifty small boys and girls, and there was not one case in which the right of receiving instruction in Dutch was claimed. In the refuge camps the Boer children, who as a rule are bright and intelligent, were extraordinarily eager to receive an English education, and a great permanent good to the rising generation was worked at that time when the refugee children were under our control. The other day a number of Dutch girls in Bloemfontein who had subscribed quite a considerable amount to some charitable or other fund were asked how they had been able to collect all this money. They explained that for a long time they had arranged that any one of them who employed a Dutch word during certain hours of the day should pay a penny fine into the fund.

There is no doubt that good feeling and mutual respect are establishing themselves in the Orange River Colony between the two races. It would be foolish, of course, to take it for granted that a permanent reconciliation has yet been effected. As far as regards the sentiment of a not inconsiderable section of the population, there is likely soon to be another swing of the pendulum, a revival of former bitterness. With some people here their friendliness towards us is what gratitude was once defined to be—a lively sense of benefits to come. In many parts of the country people imagine that the generosity of the British Government has not yet reached its limits. Men who fought against us believe that they will be fully compensated for all they have lost in the war. This is a cool assumption when one comes to consider it. It is suggested that as the result of a conflict which has been fought to the finish the defeated are to be reinstated and to lose nothing, many

even to profit largely ; whereas the victors, in the shape of the British taxpayers, are to bear the entire losses, paying both their own costs and those of the enemy. This is why in some villages the people for a long time made no efforts to rebuild their houses. They were all patiently waiting for the Government to do this for them. It has been officially explained to them, of course, that their expectations are illusory ; but apparently they still go on confidently hoping, relying on British magnanimity. They will be bitterly disappointed later on when they realise the truth, and then much of their present amiability may disappear. There will probably be a reaction, another period of ill-will towards us.

Moreover, those who fought against us will not be pleased to find that those who were on our side or who, having come in under Lord Roberts's protection proclamation, had their property subsequently destroyed or carried away by our troops, will be put on a very different footing to themselves, and will receive as large a compensation as can be contrived, if possible a full recompense for their losses. I have already dwelt on this question. It is but an act of bare justice. It would have been a lasting stain on Great Britain's honour had she not fulfilled this sacred engagement. The irreconcilables will no longer be able to jeer at the 'hands-uppers,' pointing out to them that our promises to those who were loyal to us were never kept, and that they are in no better position, nay, in a worse one, than those who resisted us to the end.

Piet De Wet has stated that about a quarter of the population would come under the category of those who were entitled to benefit under the proclamation. These men of a larger patriotism, who laid down their arms when they recognised the futility and needless cruelty

of prolonging the war, undoubtedly hastened its conclusion by their co-operation with us, and saved their countrymen from much further misery and loss. A strong argument in favour of compensating a certain section of these people is afforded by the fact that in some districts—in that of Wepener, for example—immense numbers of cattle and sheep were not destroyed, as elsewhere, by our columns, but were driven across the neighbouring border into Basutoland, where they were sold to the Basutos or exchanged for remounts. Consequently, in giving compensation in such cases the Government is merely paying for the property which it has used. These difficult questions of compensations and claims once settled, the ill-feeling between the two sections of the Boer population will, no doubt, gradually die out, the people will live together in friendliness; and, indeed, everything points to the advancement of peace and prosperity in the colony.

Of the many complicated problems—such as repatriation, compensation, and education—with which the Government has to deal, none is of more far-reaching importance than that of the settlement of British families on the land. It is in the Orange River Colony that the Government has the largest extent of land at its disposal, and in all South Africa there is no land better adapted for farming purposes than much of this. A great deal has already been accomplished by the Land Settlement Board of the Orange River Colony, and it could be doing far more now were yet larger sums set aside for its use. Seeing that, though the conditions offered are very favourable to the settler, no purely benevolent scheme is being worked out, for the Government is laying out its money to good advantage to itself, and in view also of the Imperial benefit to be

gained by placing men of our own blood, more especially our discharged soldiers, on the soil, there is a great deal to be said in favour of enabling the Government to devote a larger fund to the objects in hand and to make further purchases of the extensive and good lands available.

The scheme originated while the war was still progressing, a temporary arrangement being then made by which approved settlers—each of whom was supplied with horse and rifle and was liable to be called on for military service—were allowed to occupy Crown Lands free, until the enactment of the Land Settlement Ordinance in November last put things on a definite basis. By this ordinance the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir H. J. Goold-Adams, was empowered to lease or sell to approved applicants such portion of the Crown Lands within this colony as he might determine; and the Land Settlement Board of the Orange River Colony was established, consisting of three members appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor, the members being Mr. J. D. Palmer, Mr. Murdoch Anderson, and Mr. T. Smith (Agricultural Adviser), with Major Apthorp as secretary. These Crown Lands consist of two hundred and forty-six thousand morgen that were inherited from the late Orange Free State and three hundred and sixty-one thousand morgen which the Land Board has acquired by purchase.

There is no lack of men willing to take up the farms on the stipulated conditions; for up till March 1 last there had been nearly five thousand applications for land from men of British blood, each of whom was supplied with sufficient capital wherewith to start farming operations. Among these applicants, in addition to the home-born, the Australians, New Zealanders,

Canadians, and others from beyond the seas, there was a considerable number of farmers from the Cape Colony who had crossed the border with their families and stock to settle in this new colony, where they felt that they could be much more comfortable than in the Bond-ridden land of their birth. Many of these men will tell you that the boycotting of loyalists—the existence of which is denied by the Bond statesmen in Capetown—has made it impossible for them to live longer under the intolerable system which prevails in the Cape Colony. It is an unsatisfactory fact that Bond tactics are proving successful in driving numbers of loyalists out of the up-country districts of the colony, so that the prospects of a Progressive majority at the coming general election are becoming less hopeful. Nothing is done, of course, by the Land Settlement Board to encourage the immigration of loyalist farmers from the Cape Colony, where they are much needed ; but it cannot but admit the applications of such as are approved.

The first object of the Board is to get right men on the land, and the large number of applications that come in makes it possible to select none but the most suitable persons. An applicant who has rendered public service, especially if he has been engaged on active service in the recent conflict, is accepted in preference to others. If there are several approved applicants for one farm, lots are drawn for it. The second object of the Board is to get as many men on the available land as it will comfortably support. Care is taken to restrict, within reason, the size of each farm ; for it is not the great breeder of horses and stock nor the producer of grain on a gigantic scale who is needed here, but the man of limited capital who will take a small holding. The average allotment to individual settlers is about

seven hundred and seventy morgen, and the farms range in size from a few acres of irrigated land in the vicinity of the towns, suitable for market-gardening, up to the large, purely grazing farms in the western districts, which are of a thousand morgen and upwards. The Government sells farms to the approved settler at the following prices: For grazing farms in the West, from 15s. to 30s. per morgen; for mixed farming lands—grazing and agriculture—to the east of the railway, from 30s. to 50s. per morgen; and for particularly well situated farms in the Conquered Territory at as much as 70s. per morgen. The capital of the settlement farmer varies from £400 to £3,000. It is estimated that at least £1 per morgen is required to start farming, and for the present farms are allotted only to such as can show that they possess a capital of at least £400; except in the case of the purchasers of small market-garden holdings, for whom a capital of £100 or thereabouts suffices to make a start. It is hoped that the small holdings will for the most part be taken up by men who fought in the irregular corps in the war, many of whom cannot raise so large a sum as £400, but whose settlement on the land is highly desirable.

The following is a summary of the terms on which the Government offers farms for settlement: The farms can be taken either on lease for five years, renewable for another period of five or ten years; or on the thirty years' purchase system. If taken on lease the rent will be equal to 5 per cent. of the Government valuation of the farm, payable half-yearly. If taken on the thirty years' purchase system the farm will be paid for by sixty half-yearly instalments, the amount payable annually being $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the purchase price. Thus, if a man purchase a farm valued at £1,000 he will have to

make an annual payment of £57 10s. for thirty years, when the farm will become his property ; or, after five years' occupation, he can pay off the amount outstanding, and then acquire the freehold. The Government will make advances for permanent improvements, the purchase of stock or implements, &c., up to the amount invested by the settler, but not exceeding half the value of the farm. These advances are paid, with 5 per cent. interest, by twenty half-yearly instalments. No one who is the owner or lessee of land within the colony of twenty-five morgen or upwards is entitled to have land allotted to him by lease or sale under the provisions of the ordinance. The lessee, or the purchaser who has not yet become owner by the payment of all his instalments of purchase money, cannot assign, sub-let, nor borrow money on the security of his interest without the consent of the Board. He must cultivate the land in a proper manner, and he must personally reside on the land, not absenting himself from it for more than three months in one year without the permission of the Board. In the event of the expiration of a lease or the cancelment of an agreement of sale, the Government will compensate the settler for permanent improvements which shall have been carried out with the consent of the Board.

The Board advertises in the 'Gazette,' and in newspapers, descriptions of land set aside for settlement, inviting applications. The approved applicants are assisted in every way by the Board, which lends them carts and mules to take them over the various districts, so that they may select their farms. For their convenience rest camps have been established, where the applicants and their families are accommodated at moderate rates until they have chosen and settled on

their land. Arrangements have also been made to sell them stock, military mules, &c., at low prices. The amount of land that up to February 1 had been allotted or reserved to settlers was 325,753 morgen, but this does not include a large area which had been set aside for irrigation purposes. Three hundred and ten farmers had by then already been settled on the Government land, including a hundred and thirty British and over-sea colonials, a hundred and forty-six Afrikaner colonials, and thirty-four Dutch. The board had still 279,415 morgen left available for allotment, including land awaiting subdivision and survey.

The ordinary Dutchman's method of farming is to sit on his stoep and let his Kaffirs do a modicum of work for him. He considers manual labour beneath his dignity; as does also the white man, it must be admitted, in all lands where the tradition of the black man's slavery still lingers. With regard to the labour question a very useful pamphlet—from which I am now quoting many of my facts—issued by the Board for the information of intending settlers, justly remarks: 'It would be a mistake, however, for settlers to rely too much on outside labour. The man who is used to working with his own hands in his old country will find there is nothing to prevent his doing the same in South Africa, and it will be to his interest to disregard the unreasonable local prejudice against manual labour.' The following are some of the rules applying to native labour on the settlement farms: Not more than five native families are allowed to squat on one farm without special permission from the resident magistrate. They are allowed to build huts and kraals, to graze stock, and to have the use of lands for ploughing free of charge. In return they undertake to provide one or more young

natives for herding, milking, and grooming, who live at the homestead and receive food and £3 or an in-calf heifer per year ; one or more girls to attend at the house daily and do the rougher household work ; able-bodied natives who assist without payment in doing all ordinary work on the farm ; and men for certain extra work, such as dam-making, brick-making, and riding transport, which is done at agreed prices. When natives are working they are provided with food.

The highest rainfall in the colony is on its east side, on the Basutoland border, and it becomes less in quantity and more uncertain as one progresses westward. The main railway line divides the colony into two sections. It is only in the eastern section that crops can be grown to any extent without irrigation, and that the land is suitable for agriculture as well as for stock. In the western section no crops can be raised without irrigation, so it is there that the large stock-raising farms are chiefly to be found. It is a pity that Mr. Chamberlain visited merely the parched western districts of the colony, and not the rich eastern parts, where one can form a true idea of the vast agricultural possibilities of the country. Of this eastern area the districts that compose what is known as the Conquered Territory enjoy the most plentiful and regular rainfall—about 27 in.—and here the farmer, without any irrigation, raises not merely his summer crops of mealies, Kaffir corn, side oats and potatoes, but also his winter crop of wheat, barley, colonial and Boer oats. In the eastern section, outside the Conquered Territory, the farmer has his summer crops without irrigation ; but his winter cultivation is confined to his irrigated lands, the months from May to October being generally dry. Among the produce that can be profitably raised in the

colony are beans, peas, melons, and pumpkins ; and the farmer will find it a good investment to plant an orchard, peaches, apples, pears, apricots, plums, and figs doing well, while vines thrive in some quarters.

A large portion of the land which the Government has acquired by inheritance or by purchase, and on which it is settling farmers, is in that garden of the colony, the Conquered Territory, which includes the districts of Thabanchu, Ladybrand, Ficksburg, and the eastern parts of Senekal, Bethlehem, and Harrismith. Most of these lands are far from the railway, and up till now have been but little developed in consequence of the great cost of carrying agricultural produce by ox-waggon. But a railway connecting Ladybrand and the wheat-raising districts with the main line is in course of construction, and other lines have been sanctioned or proposed. These rich regions, therefore, will soon be brought into easy communication by rail with that immense market of South Africa, Johannesburg, when great and rapid progress in the agricultural industries should follow. Those who have traversed the dreary central plains merely by the trunk railway can form little idea of the Basuto borderland, where there is undoubtedly a good opening for the British farmer, and where, even at present, with no railways and high ox-waggon freights, the Boer farmers are making very good profits.

CHAPTER XI

A TREK THROUGH THE ORANGE RIVER COLONY—WEALTH OF THE CONQUERED TERRITORY—THABANCHU—AMONG THE SETTLEMENT FARMERS—A TYPICAL SETTLER—KAFFIR LABOUR ON THE FARMS—A FARMERS' ASSOCIATION—EXTORTIONATE STOREKEEPERS—NATIVE RIGHTS IN MOROKO'S COUNTRY—THE TWEESPRUIT RELIEF CAMP—BOERS ON THE RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION—THE GOVERNMENT STUD FARM.

FROM Bloemfontein I travelled by road to the Transvaal border, following a circuitous route and visiting on my way the townships of Ladybrand, Ficksburg, Bethlehem, Lindley, and Heilbron. I left Bloemfontein on January 29 with a Cape cart, four mules, and a useful Basuto boy, who had a little English, as driver. It was my intention in the first place to wander through the Conquered Territory and visit the districts wherein the soldiers who had fought for Great Britain in the late war were being settled on the soil by the Land Settlement Board. The Conquered Territory, the granary of South Africa, is about a hundred miles long by thirty broad, lying about five thousand feet above the sea level. Throughout its length it borders Basutoland, and was claimed by that native State until 1869, when, in consequence of the frequent collisions between the Boers and Basutos, we took Basutoland under our protection and fixed a new boundary. This gave to the Orange Free State the extensive tract of rich country which since then has borne the somewhat inappropriate name of the Conquered Territory.

. In this, the greatest wheat-growing district in South

Africa, admirably adapted for farming, the Government has fortunately acquired, by inheritance from the Orange Free State and also by recent purchases, a considerable amount of good land. Thus to the south-east of the township of Thabanchu the Board had already divided, when I visited the district, into settlement farms of five hundred morgen each, an area of, roughly, twenty miles by ten, on which about one hundred settlers had taken up their allotted land. On my way to Ladybrand I zigzagged through this region, visiting many farms, driving across the roadless veldt from one settler's dwelling to another—a journey of about a hundred and fifty miles that occupied five days and enabled me to form a fair idea as to how the settlers were getting on.

The important railway line that is to pass through Ladybrand, Ficksburg, and Bethlehem, and thence to have extensions that will connect it with the Johannesburg and Durban lines, is in course of construction, and was to be opened to Thabanchu the week after I was in the district. The then terminus was at Sanna's Post, twenty-two miles from Bloemfontein, where the waterworks are, the scene of our well-known disaster in the spring of 1901. To Sanna's Post I sent on my cart by road, to rejoin it by train on the following morning. From here I drove about twenty miles to the little town of Thabanchu, across a parched land, dry and dusty after the long drought, past many grim blockhouses and roofless farmhouses, and under a blue sky flecked with innumerable little white wool-like clouds, the sign of continued hot rainless weather. Thabanchu is a straggling little village lying under the isolated mountain of the same name—a grand precipitous mass which is the landmark of the countryside, and I found it to be

nearly always in sight during my next five days' wanderings. Thabanchu (the Black Mountain) is a historical peak to all Boers, for it was the rendezvous where the Voortrekkers, travelling with their waggons from all parts of the settled southern country, assembled to plan their future.

From here I drove on eastward to the farm at which I was to pass the night. Soon I entered a country of very different aspect to the dreary burnt plain I had left behind me. I passed through a pleasant, undulating land, where, even after the prolonged drought, there was fairly good pasture covering hill and dale. In the valley bottoms broad stretches of vivid fresh green marked the fields of mealies and Kaffir corn. I also saw great fields of ripening oats on both sides, and the yellow stubble showed where the wheat had already been harvested. Here and there was a solitary mud hut or tent, the temporary home of the soldier settler who had purchased a farm from the Land Settlement Board. I began now to realise that the Conquered Territory is indeed a desirable land for the farmer who is prepared to 'rough it' for a while and will not lose heart in a bad season, as most unfortunately this last season, the opening season for most of the settlers, has undoubtedly been. The wheat crop, it is true, has been excellent throughout the territory, but the harvest was small, for the war prevented the sowing of wheat on a large scale. While hostilities were in progress the settlers, under their provisional arrangement with the Government, occupied and cultivated the land free of rent, on the understanding that military service would, if necessary, be required of them, but they were not permitted to sow their wheat except within a short radius of one or other of the protecting blockhouses.

The season for sowing wheat is from April to June, so that after the proclamation of peace it was too late for the farmers to sow without running some risk of losing the crop.

At last I reached my destination, the holding of Mr. Langdridge, which is a section of a large farm called Ngoanyana. Ngoanyana is one of five large contiguous farms which were purchased by the Government from Mr. Newberry, an old settler and great landed proprietor in the Conquered Territory. The Land Settlement Board has divided these five farms into a number of smaller ones of five hundred morgen each—the average size of a land settlement farm in this rich agricultural district.

Mr. Langdridge can be taken as a typical settler, so that an account of his experiences may prove of interest. An energetic young Irishman, he took his degree at Trinity College, Dublin, and was ranching in the Argentine when war broke out. He and some of our countrymen who had settled in South America took ship for the Cape, providing their own horses, rifles, and accoutrements, and volunteered for service. He joined Rimington's Guides and fought throughout the war. Pending the building of his homestead he and two other young Irishmen are occupying what remains of an old Dutch farmhouse standing on the property, a nine-roomed ruin, for British troops have torn off roof, doors, and window sashes, leaving, however, the main door, which is riddled with shell and bullets. It will be remembered that there was much fighting hereabouts, and from the farm one sees Springhaan Nek, through which De Wet forced his way after losing a thousand of his horses, whose bones are still to be seen scattered over the valley below. The corrugated iron roof which Mr.

Langdridge has procured for his homestead now temporarily covers the old farmhouse, having been laid across the shot-battered walls; so that the place, despite its dismantled appearance, is snug and dry when the storm rages without. As the house stands on the hillside, one commands from it a fine view over the surrounding mountains and valleys. Hundreds of acres of crops are spread beneath one, and what greatly adds to the beauty and freshness of the scene, especially to one who has been travelling over the treeless veldt, is the extensive plantation of young trees near the house, sloping down from it to the valley and climbing high up the mountain behind. Here, some years ago, Mr. Newberry planted fourteen thousand trees—firs, blue gums, oaks, and others—most of which seem to be doing well. The Government has taken over this nursery, which does not form part of Mr. Langdridge's farm, and a custodian has been appointed to continue the useful work initiated by Mr. Newberry; for every man who plants a tree is a benefactor to this country. As I looked out at that fair landscape, with the trees, the mountains, the valleys, the patches of cultivation, I could easily have imagined that I was gazing at some scene in the Scottish Highlands.

Mr. Langdridge is the earliest settler in this district, having entered into occupation of his farm under the provisional system before the conclusion of the war. He has worked hard and is satisfied with his prospects, being the right sort of man for the country. Our settlers in new colonies are generally of a hopeful and a mercurial temperament, as, indeed, they need to be; and I noticed here, as I have noticed in Australia in still more depressing circumstances, that every farmer was happy and none was growling, though a prolonged

drought at the critical season of the year had destroyed half the mealies—the most important crop of all—and was threatening to kill off the remainder. But Mr. Langdridge had done well with his oats and potatoes. He made a good deal out of the vegetables which he raised during the war, and which were then at famine prices, a cabbage, for example, fetching 3s. 6d. Taking the risk of failure, he sowed more wheat than his neighbours in June, at the conclusion of hostilities, with a profitable result, and his cattle and sheep are thriving, so that he is not dissatisfied with his first year's experience of South African farming. A few Kaffir families are squatted on his land in accordance with the local custom. These natives have the right to graze their cattle and plough on his farm, and in return give him a percentage of their crops and supply paid labour both on the farm and in the house, the terms on which they work being more or less those which I explained in my last chapter. The system works well, and the Kaffirs seem perfectly contented. Like many other settlers, Mr. Langdridge keeps a little store where he barter cloth, beads, cooking utensils, and so forth for the grain and flour of the Kaffirs. The storekeepers in the towns talked of asking the Government to prevent this competition with themselves on the part of the settlers. Despite the great cost of transport by ox-waggon, a settler can undersell the town trader, whose charges are exorbitant throughout the interior of South Africa.

During the next four days I was travelling over the veldt, visiting the far-scattered farms of the settlers. All the men I met had served in the war. There were Englishmen, Scotchmen, and Irishmen who had fought in various corps, Canadians of Strathcona's Horse,

Australians and New Zealanders of the Antipodean contingents, all apparently practical men who knew how to get to work to make their living out of the patches of bare veldt that were their portion. Some of the outer allotments adjoin the farms of the Boers ; and in every case our settlers seemed to be on the best of terms with their Dutch neighbours, the British and the Boers interchanging little services and forming friendships. Here, as elsewhere in the Orange River Colony, I found all the Dutch farmers, 'bywoners,' and transport riders courteous and friendly. There were no signs of that bitter feeling which so widely prevails in the Cape Colony, and for which the wealthier and more educated Dutchmen of the Cape, who instigated rebellion while doing none of the fighting themselves, are mainly responsible.

A description of my first day's journey will serve to give a general idea of my experiences among the land settlement farms. Having slept at Mr. Langdridge's farm, I set out on the following morning to visit the farms in the Springhaan Nek and Alexandria districts, my host saddling up one of his horses and accompanying me. We travelled for about twelve miles over the veldt in a northerly direction, and I saw scattered over the country, at long distances apart, the solitary tents and little mud huts which form the temporary homes of the settlers, for it is not everyone who has the luck, like my friend, to have a ruined farmhouse on his land. The ordinary settler, after journeying to the spot of his choice on a waggon lent to him by the Land Settlement Board, is dumped down with his belongings on the open, treeless veldt, with no fence to mark off his property, and not even a Kaffir hut into which to crawl for shelter. But being a man of resource he soon

makes himself comfortable in a rough way, looking forward hopefully to the near day when he can bring a wife to a good farmhouse of red brick, surrounded by groves of young trees, gardens, and fields of grain.

We outspanned at mid-day on the farm of two Australian settlers. They were living in a shanty chiefly made of broken packing cases and canvas while they were building themselves a spacious mud hut, the roof for which lay ready on the ground. It was made of corrugated iron stripped from the blockhouses. They had already brought a good deal of land under cultivation, and had raised satisfactory crops. We had lunch with them, and with the bully beef that forms the usual veldt fare we ate delicious potatoes and other vegetables which they had produced. As I realised later, when visiting more matured farms, all the fruits and vegetables of Europe thrive on this fertile soil.

After lunch we inspanned and continued our journey. We passed through the great line of blockhouses, linked with barbed-wire fencing, which extends for over eighty miles from Bloemfontein to the Basuto border. We saw the long barrier stretching east and west, crossing hill and dale, a deep trench bordering the wire fencing, and the forts and blockhouses standing at intervals. But the formidable defence did not suffice to stop De Wet, and we passed the spot where he broke through it. We crossed the northern border of the Alexandria district, and left for a while the area included in the land settlement to visit a farm called Egypte, where the settlement farmers were to hold a meeting and discuss the formation of a farmers' association. Egypte is a lonely farmhouse on a bare eminence commanding an extensive view over the undulating veldt. From all parts of the horizon we saw the settlers riding in, first

becoming visible as they crossed the various necks or gaps in the surrounding hills, then concentrating to one central point. As someone remarked, it looked exactly like the gathering of a Boer commando. At last about forty settlers were collected at the farm, a typical group—British from home, Australians, Canadians, and Afrikaner colonials; the Afrikaner colonials being in the majority on this occasion, though on the roll of settlers they are far outnumbered by the oversea British. All had served in some military capacity in the war, if it was only in a Town Guard, as was the case with some of the Cape Colony men; and a fair proportion were retired officers of his Majesty's service. They were certainly a hard and likely-looking lot of men.

As no room in the house could contain so large a gathering, the meeting was held in the waggon shed. The owner of the farm was appointed chairman, and as the tea was passed round he explained that their object was to form an association which should protect the interests of the farmers. He pointed out that in the first place such an association, by the establishment of co-operative stores or otherwise, could enable the farmers to purchase goods at reasonable rates, instead of having to pay the existing exorbitant and unwarrantable prices to the storekeepers of Thabanchu and other townships, who charge for a plough nearly double what it can be purchased for on the coast. In the second place the association, by appointing agents at certain centres, could arrange for the sale of the farmers' produce in the best markets; while in the third place the settlers, through the association, would be able to make their representations as a body to the Government, which would naturally pay more attention to an

appeal from such an organisation than to one coming from an individual.

The exorbitant charges made by the storekeepers constitute a just grievance and retard the progress of the country. The storekeepers, anxious to make their fortunes quickly, maintain a scale of prices that may be fair enough in a new country where dangers are incurred and freights are high, as was the case in Matabeleland in the early days; but such a scale is quite unjustifiable here. Many storekeepers, again, in this country are men of small, if any, capital. They get their goods on credit, paying a high rate of interest, from larger traders, who on their part procure the goods on similar terms from others, the merchants on the coast also making a high charge in order to cover their bad debts. With all these added charges everything is naturally dear, and it will be well for South Africa when this class of middlemen disappears.

One would have thought that the formation of a farmers' association on the lines proposed would have commended itself to all present. But even in Arcadia there is dissension, and it soon became obvious that a group of young settlers from the Cape Colony were inclined to obstruct the proceedings. They wanted to have things all their own way, and had but little consideration for the oversea British, whom they affect to regard as intruders on the land—an extremely unfair attitude, seeing that the object of this land settlement scheme was to bring fresh British blood into South Africa and not to deplete the Cape Colony of the few loyalist farmers who exist there. I would not have alluded to this dissension were it not that it throws a sidelight, as I shall now show, on the difficult native labour question which is troubling South Africa. To

follow the points that were raised by the settlers one must understand the conditions that prevail in this portion of the Conquered Territory. All these settlement farms in the Thabanchu district are included in what was once Moroko's country. Unlike the Ladybrand district, which has long since been occupied and farmed by the white men, and where the cultivation is matured, this was a black man's land until quite recently. Only sixteen years ago this region, though within the treaty boundary of the Free State, was a native territory under the rule of the Chief Moroko, whose principal staad was at Thabanchu. On the death of this Chief two rivals fought for the succession, both of whom were assisted by Boer freebooters, who received their pay in the shape of farms and cattle. At last the Free State Government interfered and took over the rich territory, reserving some of the land for itself, while Boers bought, or by other means got possession of, much of the remainder. These farms were at the time subjected to servitudes which gave the natives certain grazing and ploughing rights for a term of fifteen years. The servitude question is a complicated one, and has not yet been settled. But it suffices for the argument that numbers of wealthy Kaffirs are settled on the land, owning large herds and cultivating extensive tracts, while the poorer Kaffirs, owning fewer cattle, cultivate their patches and graze their cattle on the farms of the white men, in return supplying labour or giving a percentage of their crops, generally either a third or a half, according to the custom, which, as I have already explained, prevails all over this part of the country.

The war has unsettled the natives, and there are fewer on the land than there were three years ago.

But many are now returning, some to squat for the time on unoccupied Crown lands, and others, by arrangement, on the white men's farms. The white settler has no difficulty in procuring a sufficiency of native labour provided he follows the ancient custom. The law permits only five Kaffir families to settle on one farm, and the settler himself can set his own limitations on the number of cattle they may graze on his land. The British and the oversea colonials are generally adopting this system, much to their own advantage ; and some, instead of taking a share of the squatter's crops, demand more labour from him. The poorer settler cannot afford to purchase many head of cattle, but with natives on his land who plough for him with their own oxen, and who ride transport for him with their own waggons, he is enabled to bring much more of his land under cultivation than would otherwise be possible. Moreover, as the reaping can be carried through with great rapidity under this system, the risk of loss through heavy rains in the harvesting season is much diminished. But many of the settlers who come from the Cape Colony possessed farms in that country, and brought their stock to this district with them, in some cases the full number of cattle that a five hundred morgen farm can possibly carry. Consequently, they object to the natives squatting on their land, having no room for them, and it is their aim to employ, exclusively, hired native labourers, who possess no cattle, and will not be permitted to use the land. This system prevails in many parts of the Cape Colony, but is impracticable in a district of Kaffir cattle-owners. I know of at least one farm where an attempt to enforce this uncongenial system has led to all the boys leaving it, and now the settler finds it impossible to engage others.

The Cape Colony settlers, realising that no Kaffirs will work for them under these conditions as long as other settlers allow the natives on their lands, are anxious to enforce the adoption of their policy on the rest. They did not express their views clearly at the meeting, but in private conversation they maintained that the main end of a farmers' association should be to prevent the natives from settling on the farms, and to fix the rate of wages for the hired native labourer. They dub the British who adopt the local custom 'white Kaffirs,' and tell you that the farmers' association they would support would be one that bound its members under heavy penalties to admit no native squatters on their farms. Their efforts to enforce these views will, of course, be unavailing; but if they had their own way they would undoubtedly create a serious labour difficulty where one does not at present exist. By driving the Kaffirs off the land and making it extremely difficult for the farmer to obtain labour they would, of course, inflict a greater injury on the oversea settlers than on themselves, for the oversea settlers are engaged more largely in agriculture, and for agriculture much more labour is, of course, needed than for stock-raising.

The somewhat unsatisfactory farmers' meeting having been brought to its close, we travelled eastward across the veldt until sunset, when we reached the place at which we purposed to pass the night, the Tweespruit relief camp. It will be remembered that the Government, in order to relieve the many 'bywoners,' returned prisoners of war, and other poor people, decided to establish extensive relief works, where they would be given employment until they could settle on the land again. The relief labour is chiefly employed in the

construction of dams and canals on the irrigation lands, the construction of the Thabanchu Railway, and the erection of Government buildings. Tweespruit is one of the most important of these relief camps. Here the Government has acquired a farm of seventeen thousand morgen, through which the Thabanchu railway is to pass, and we found a number of Boers working on the construction of a five-mile section of the line. It is here, too, that the Government stud farm is to be established, and there is work in connection with it, including the construction of the buildings, the quarrying of stone in the neighbourhood, and the fencing, and making of a huge dam, that will keep the men busily employed for several months to come. Relief labour will also be used for the erection of the buildings in connection with the creamery which is shortly to be started at this place. The system that has proved so successful in Ireland will be followed at Tweespruit. The cream will be extracted from the milk sent in by the settlement farmers, and butter and cheese will be made on a large scale. Dairymaids are, I understand, shortly coming out from home to teach the Boer lasses how to work in the creamery. The four hundred and fifty men, women, and children in the relief camp were all under canvas, the tents were pitched in a fine situation on gently-sloping, well-drained ground, and the health of the camp was good. Each able-bodied labourer received 4s. 6d. a day, but the wage for the skilled mechanics, of whom there were very few in the camp, was 10s. a day. These poor people certainly all looked very healthy, happy, and contented. There was a school in the camp in which the bright and intelligent children, who here, as in the refuge camps, displayed a

great eagerness to acquire knowledge, received a useful education. It was a well-ordered camp in every respect, but even here complete harmony did not reign, for a good deal of ill-feeling existed between the men who fought against us to the end and the much-abused 'hands-uppers.'

CHAPTER XII

A LONG DROUGHT—A BRITISH HOME IN THE BASUTO BORDERLAND—THE METHODS OF THE LAND SETTLEMENT BOARD PUBLIC OUTSPANS—ON THE LEEUW RIVER—THE GREAT FLOUR MILLS—LADYBRAND.

FOR three days more I travelled on from farm to farm, visiting the cheery settlers who were living the rough life of the pioneer, working hard on their land, and ever hopeful despite the continuance of the destructive drought. The spruits were getting dry; the wind would not veer to the rain-bringing quarter, the north-east, but blew day after day, hot and parching, from the west, driving before it clouds of dust across the thirsty veldt. But though the sky was cloudless above, there was always to be seen to the eastward the long line of fleecy cloud that topped the purple-peaked ranges of Basutoland. For that favoured country with its cloud-attracting mountains, which are as lofty as the Pyrenees, catches refreshing rains in its fertile valleys when there is pitiless drought on the western plains, where the farmer, standing under the hopeless blue, can always see, as he gazes towards the east, that snow-white cloudland floating above the black man's country. There had not been such a drought for fifty years, said old settlers.

I was not always among the rude shanties of the new settlers, for there are some old-established British farms in this countryside, two or three of which I also visited. Thus one day, having crossed the eastern

border of the land settlement district, I outspanned on the farm called Lovedale, where there are large flour mills. Here Mr. Quinn and his family occupy a comfortable homestead. It is approached by an avenue of well-grown trees ; a pleasant garden, where British flowers thrive, surrounds it ; and beyond this are shady orchards and plantations of firs and other trees ; while, hard by it, the great dam that supplies the mills forms a pretty lake of rippling water, refreshing to look on in this hot land. Within the premises I found myself in the home of the educated English gentleman, with the refining touches about the house that spoke of a lady's presence, a place that carried one's thoughts back to the Old Country, and was in strange contrast to the rough hut of the young settler on the bare veldt. But Lovedale, it seemed to me, was but the type of many a home which will shortly be made in South Africa when the land settlement farmers have fairly established themselves, have built their homesteads, and taken wives to themselves, as young settlers in this colony, of all men in the world, undoubtedly should do. Then the traveller in the Conquered Territory will find himself in the midst of a pleasant society of British families scattered over the countryside, of which society such homes as those of Mr. Quinn and Mr. Bateman already form the nucleus.

The settlers on the Government farms are, as I have already explained, hopeful and happy ; but it is not to be expected that the Land Settlement Board, at the initiation of this novel undertaking, should always act with unerring wisdom. Mistakes have certainly been made, and are rectified as soon as experience brings fuller knowledge. Some of the settlers to whom I spoke appeared to have genuine grievances. But these sol-

dier-farmers are men of grit, and not impatient and querulous children ; so that when they pointed out to me the regulations with which they found fault they did so without any bitterness. They knew that the intentions of the Board were excellent, and that it had their interests at heart. They acknowledged their gratitude to the Government, which had treated them generously, selling them the best land in the colony at a considerably lower price than it could be bought in the open market, and on very easy terms as regards payment. For the settler buys his farm from the Land Settlement Board on the thirty years' purchase system, each of the thirty annual payments amounting to $5\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. of the purchase price. As the first half-yearly instalment is not due until next January, the settler who took up land under the provisional arrangement before the conclusion of hostilities has his farm rent free for eighteen months or more, in some cases for two years.

It is the poorer man, the assisted settler, who apparently has reason for complaint. One of the assisted settlers put his case before me as follows. He applied to the Board to advance to him, in accordance with the conditions laid down, money with which to purchase the seed he required for his arable land. The Board would not advance the money, but supplied him with the seed, charging it against his account. There was great delay in sending the seed, and some of it reached him too late to be of any use this season. The seed was for the most part inferior in quality, and he could have easily bought better in the open market at a lower price than the Board was charging. The bulk of the seed potatoes which he bought from the Board were rotten ; but for this he subsequently received compensa-

tion. On the other hand, the Board, so as to make itself secure, would not allow him to sell his produce himself, but ordered him to forward it to Bloemfontein and sold it for him, retaining a portion of the money realised as an instalment in repayment of the advances. But the Board is not a practical farmers' association, and its ways are at times unbusiness-like. The man found that it usually sold his produce—throwing it on a crowded market at the wrong time—for considerably less than he could have got for it himself. He was thus compelled to buy dear and sell cheap, and, moreover, the Board kept him waiting for months before it sent in its accounts and paid him the balance due.

The Government undertakes to make advances for approved permanent improvements up to the amount invested by the settler. This was understood to mean that if, for example, the settler desired to expend £300 on the construction of his homestead the Board would advance him £150 on his providing the other £150. But an assisted settler told me that in his and other cases the settler had in the first place to complete the work at his own cost, to expend—to take the supposititious case above—the whole sum of £300 to build his house, before the Board will lend him the £150. As the settler is not permitted to borrow from outside on the security of his interest in the land, and must pay ready money for the building material and labour, this system, and also the above-mentioned arrangements for the supplying of seed and the sale of produce, cannot but work badly and cripple the settler at the outset of his operations, at the very time when he needs all his available money to enable him to make a good start and forge surely ahead.

The Board no doubt acted rightly in making the

above provisions to secure itself, for to have advanced large sums of money to men who had but just entered into occupation of their farms, who had so far effected no improvements, and had no security of any description to offer, would have been to invite fraud. As a matter of fact, several of the first men to take up allotments turned out to be undesirables, and have since abandoned their farms. At the beginning of the Board's operations, when thousands of men were sending in applications for farms, and when the details connected with the complicated scheme had yet to be organised, the staff was much overworked. It was all the more pressed because the Government was anxious to get the approved settlers on the land with the least possible delay, in view of the fact that many of them were running through their small capital while awaiting the allotment of their farms.

It is indeed marvellous, taking all the circumstances into consideration, that so much has already been successfully accomplished. The machinery of the Board will work more smoothly as time advances. Some of the existing strict conditions will, no doubt, be withdrawn, as the necessity for these will disappear when the settlers have settled definitely on the land and have added to its value by their labours. It might be well if a committee of practical South African farmers, however, was attached to the Board, for the Board's agricultural advice is not always sound. For example, when issuing Algerian seed oats to settlers last year it informed them that February was the right month in which to sow these. The local farmers made merry at the expense of the confiding settlers, some of whom duly sowed the oats. The oats, too, duly came out of the ground, soon to be killed off, however, as might

have been expected, by the frost. The Board compensated those who had lost by following its instructions.

There is yet another question which is disturbing the minds of many of the settlers, and to put it right now after the farms have been allotted will be no easy matter. According to the old Free State law, each farm has to provide a public outspan where sheep and cattle can graze and water when travelling. This law still holds good ; but as the Land Settlement Board has divided the farms which it has acquired into a number of small farms, of which each is subject to a public right of outspan, there are now ten or more outspans for every one that existed before the division. This presses very hard on the settler whose little farm of five hundred morgen happens to be near one of the main roads and to have a good spruit on it. The oxen of the passing transport riders, the cattle and sheep driven by—more especially the Government cattle, of which great droves were at that time being taken across this part of the country to the repatriation centres—are ever making their halts on the man's farm, to eat up all his veldt and drink up all his water, until at last his grazing land presents the appearance of an arid desert.

Having thus wandered among the cheery settlers for a few days I returned to Mr. Langdridge's farm on the evening of February 1 to pick up the baggage I had left there. I had scarcely reached the farm when the rain began to fall at last, after a three months' drought which had been broken merely by a few light showers that were of no service to the farmer. There is no doubt that such a drought is very exceptional here, for the rainfall is regular, and it is exceedingly rare that the crops suffer as they have done this year. The

crashing thunder and the heavy masses of black cloud—amid which the forked lightning played—driving westward from the Basuto mountains, heralded the deluge of rain that endured throughout the night. A succession of storms and soft showers afterwards swept over the whole countryside, gladdening the hearts of the farmers and ensuring the saving of a considerable portion of the mealie crop.

On the following morning I set out with my cart and mules to drive to Ladybrand, a distance of about fifty miles by the route I followed. As the rain had made the roads very heavy the journey occupied two days, and I halted for the night at the Leeuw River Mills, one of the most beautiful spots in the colony. Mr. Bateman's house, near his great flour mills which grind the grain for all the countryside, is one of those pleasant homesteads of which I have spoken—an oasis of civilisation and refinement set in the wild veldt. He has planted a great number of trees, and of his oaks especially he has good reason to be proud. Hard by the house I beheld, to my amazement, a veritable highland lake, tossing in little billows under the strong breeze. It was tree-encircled and shut in by green downs, through the gaps of which were visible the purple peaks of far mountain ranges. This lake is over five miles in length, nearly a mile in breadth, and forty feet in depth in the centre. It was difficult to realise that this was an artificial piece of water until one came to its lower end and saw that it was formed by the damming in of the river with a huge wall that closed the valley mouth. It supplies the turbines of the flour mills, and, like the dam at Assouan, greatly benefits the farmers owning land below by causing a regular flow of water at all seasons.

On the following day I drove to Ladybrand. The little town is hemmed in on its west side by a rugged ridge called the Plaatberg, up whose steep slopes the toiling mules dragged the cart over an abominable road, strewn with great boulders, that threatened frequent capsizes. On reaching the further edge of the rocky plateau on the top, where the berg falls precipitously to the green plain below, I opened out one of the prettiest views I have ever seen in South Africa. Below me, in the centre of the grassy plain, nestling in foliage, lay Ladybrand, with its red-brick houses clustering round its steepled church; the cloud-capped Basuto mountains, nearer than I had yet seen them, and with the details of their rugged peaks and gorges clearly discernible, forming a magnificent background to the scene. I saw the old cart road winding down beneath me, as rough and dangerous as that by which I had ascended. But avoiding this we trotted fast and without danger down the steep zigzags of quite a new road, a wonderfully good one for South Africa—smooth, and walled in on the precipice side. I found that it had been constructed by a detachment of Royal Engineers, who were stationed here during the war. The people of Ladybrand say that it is a pity the war did not last a little longer, so that the sappers would have had time to construct a good road on the further slope of the ridge also. We drove past the white tents of the 2nd Mounted Infantry, who now compose the garrison of the place, into the streets of the town.

Ladybrand is a pretty little village of about a thousand inhabitants. Nestling in a pleasant grove, it lies in the midst of a circus of green pastures and waving cornfields, hemmed in by picturesque kopjes. The great peaks of the Maluti range in Basutoland are

visible across the neighbouring Caledon River, which here forms the frontier. Even in the summer months the cool breezes that sweep down from the bleak heights bring quite a bracing climate to the place, which is five thousand feet above the sea level. Situated in the heart of the Conquered Territory, the richest wheat-producing region of South Africa, and being the centre for the Basutoland trade through Maseru, which is but twelve miles distant, Ladybrand is a very prosperous little place. But it is likely soon to be shorn of much of its importance, for in consequence of the great expense that would be incurred in tunnelling through the Plaatberg, the railway that is to connect Bloemfontein with Harrismith through Ficksburg and Bethlehem will not come within seven miles of Ladybrand, a prospect that naturally somewhat troubles its inhabitants, as this means that another township will spring up on the railway line, probably at Modder Poort, to become the depôt for the Basutoland trade.

Ladybrand, though a few of its houses have been a good deal knocked about, did not suffer nearly as much in the war as did most of the townships of the Orange River Colony. Of all the places I had visited since I crossed the Orange River—with the exception, of course, of Bloemfontein—Ladybrand showed fewest signs of the ravages of war, and this despite its vicissitudes during the three years of fighting, including the memorable attack on its British garrison by Fourie's commando. This little garrison, consisting of but a hundred and fifty men in all, belonging to the Worcestershire Regiment and the Wiltshire Yeomanry, occupied an extended position on the ridges of the Plaatberg overlooking the town, and, even as did the colonial troops at Wepener, successfully resisted the attacks of a vastly

superior Boer force, well supplied with artillery, until the columns of White and Bruce Hamilton came to the relief. Taking good cover among the boulders of the Plaatberg, our men enfiladed the streets of Ladybrand, and made it untenable for the Boers. The many bullet marks to be seen on the walls of the houses testify to the vigilant defence on the part of our troops. Here, too, as at Wepener, thousands of armed Basuto warriors watched the conflict from beyond the river which forms their frontier, held back by the order of the British Government, reluctantly obedient, ready and eager at a word to rush in to our assistance and fight out their long blood feud with the Boers.

This rugged Plaatberg is full of beautiful scenery, as I realised when I crossed it on my way from the west. A wilderness of picturesque crags and dells close to the town has been converted into a public pleasure ground known as Lily Hoek, for the great arums abound there—a charming shaded place of huge creeper-entwined rocks, dark fern-grown chasms and grottoes, dense groves and flowering jungles, running rivulets and waterfalls, through which the narrow footpaths wind. Ladybrand, with its perfect climate and comparative freedom from dust, is highly recommended by medical men as a residence for invalids. When the railway comes near it, and suitable hotels or sanatoriums are established, it should be a favourite health resort. As things are now only the robust can well travel over these rough roads and put up with the accommodation afforded in the hotels of this part of South Africa. This is not said in disparagement of Ladybrand, which can fairly boast of possessing the most comfortable hotel of all this countryside.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LADYBRAND DISTRICT—JOURNEY TO FICKSBURG—THE BASUTO BORDER
—THE WHEAT COUNTRY—THE FRUITS OF THE GUERRILLA WAR—THE
IRRECONCILABLES—DE WET—BOER FARMERS RE-ESTABLISHING THEM-
SELVES—FICKSBURG—LOSSES OF THE TOWNSPEOPLE DURING THE WAR—
BOER ADMIRATION FOR MR. CHAMBERLAIN—REPATRIATION IN THE
FICKSBURG DISTRICT.

ON February 8 I left Ladybrand for Ficksburg, which is about forty miles distant to the north-east, to visit the settlement farms in that rich district before continuing my journey to the Transvaal border. With my Cape cart and four mules I traversed a most delightful country. The Ladybrand district has long been settled. For generations the land has been farmed by Boers of a superior class to those generally to be met with in the country—men of intelligence and education, of progressive views in so far as farming is concerned, cultivating their land carefully, and adopting modern appliances and improvements. This is as it should be, seeing that these men occupy one of the richest regions in the world, which it would be a sin to waste. In the course of my journey I observed but few Kaffir kraals and comparatively few natives. Here the natives settled on the land are not numerous, and the Boer landowner in the district does not—as is his habit in many parts of the country—sit on his stoep, smoke, and drink coffee in dignified idleness, while the Kaffir squatters on his farm sow the seed in their primitive way and graze their stock, giving him half the produce as his share.

In the equally rich Thabanchu district, Moroko's old country, which I had recently traversed, the natives, as I have explained, are settled on the land in large numbers—in some parts one could imagine oneself to be in some native reserve—and landless Kaffirs are now occupying the yet unapportioned lands that have been taken over by the Government. Many of these natives will no doubt ultimately have to move elsewhere. For the present the British settler who has purchased a farm from the Government finds himself compelled to permit the Kaffirs to squat on his land in order that he may obtain their labour. The day, it is to be hoped, will come when a sufficiency of hired labour will be available, and the hired labour system is perhaps the best for the farmer himself, as it prevents him from sinking into the lazy ways of the old-fashioned Boer; but to remove the Kaffirs from the soil before a labour supply has been secured would be to ruin the settlement farmer engaged in agriculture.

I did not know the road, and my Basuto driver was a stranger in this part of the country. Consequently, as many of the branch roads leading from farm to farm were as good as, or rather were no worse than, the main road, it was not long before I missed my way and followed the wrong track. But this mattered little, as I knew that by ever keeping the Maluti range and the Caledon on my right I should ultimately reach Ficksburg, which is on the bank of that river. And so we drove on league after league, meeting no one. It was Sunday, and the Dutch farmers were not about. I passed through the fairest of countries and enjoyed finer scenery than I should have seen had I taken the right road; for the track I was following was nearer the river and in a more hilly country than the other.

Throughout the forty miles' drive I saw no wild veldt. Where the vales and gently sloping downs were not covered with short green grass there stretched the great fields of maize and other crops, and large patches of yellow stubble to show where the wheat had been harvested. The extensive view I commanded from some of the heights, over hundreds of square miles of crops and pastures, gave me some idea of the wealth of this wonderful Conquered Territory. It has been estimated that when all the suitable land in it has been brought under cultivation the output of wheat should be thirty millions of bushels a year.

We crossed rugged range after range, by rough steep tracks over which the cart leapt, tumbled, and bumped, often at the imminent risk of capsizing, after the usual manner of South African travel. The rolling sea of verdure was only broken by these high ridges and by the quaintly-shaped rocky kopjes that topped each grassy pyramid, some squared and resembling castles of a Titanic race, others undermined all round the base and swelling out at the summit like monstrous toadstools. It was a scenery ever varying and most picturesque, and on the right one's view was always bounded by the peaked Maluti range crowned as usual with banks of fleecy cloud. Of bush there was but little, and that only on the kopjes; and of trees there were none save those that surrounded each farmhouse. All the homesteads I passed were—as I had seen them everywhere else in the colony—roofless, doorless, with gaping windows, and in many cases with walls fallen in, mere heaps of ruin. It was a doleful succession of desolated homes, each set in the dark verdure of its encircling grove. I noticed, too, that here, as in other parts of the colony, but few cattle, sheep, and horses were

grazing on the rich pastures. Practically all had been swept away, and only the few animals that the farmers had purchased to restock their farms, or had procured on credit from the Repatriation Board, represented the great herds and flocks that roamed here before the war.

It was the wantonly devastating and useless guerilla war that brought about most of the mischief. This part of the country had settled down peacefully; the farmers had come in, and were resuming farming operations, thinking that hostilities were over as far as this region was concerned, when the storm broke on them. The British columns that swept the countryside are responsible only for a portion of the work of destruction. The Boer guerillas avenged themselves on those who had surrendered under Lord Roberts's proclamations by destroying the homesteads of the 'hands-uppers' and carrying the stock off their lands. Many a farm that was burned by our men because they had been fired on from its windows was the home of quite innocent people. The Boers used to select the farms of the surrendered burghers for their defensive positions, so that these houses and not the dwellings of those who were still in the field should suffer at our hands. I have visited many of the surrendered farmers, and bitterly do they speak of the guerilla war that brought such ruin to their country. De Wet is no hero in their eyes. One very justly said to me: 'I was no traitor to my country. I fought as long as there was any hope of our maintaining our independence. When I and others realised that it was a hopeless struggle we surrendered, to spare our country greater suffering, to prevent the annihilation of the Boer people. They brand us as "hands-uppers," but we are no more so than De Wet himself. He and his followers had at last to surrender

even as we did. The only difference between us is that we surrendered at what we maintain was the right moment; they later, after they had ruined the country by that mad and useless guerilla war.'

There had just reached this countryside while I was traversing it a copy of a Bloemfontein paper, in which an account was given of Mr. Chamberlain's interview with Christian De Wet, General Hertzog, and the others who composed the deputation of ex-burghers who met him at Bloemfontein. It was with joy that the 'hands-upper' farmers read of Mr. Chamberlain's proper treatment of the impudent demands put forward by the irreconcilable section. I have met men who may be described as irreconcilables who consider that the deputies made fools of themselves on that occasion, gave their cause away, and possibly retarded for some years the restoration of responsible government to the colony. It is well that these disaffected people should speak their minds openly here. They are unlike the smoothly talking subtle men of the Bond whom Mr. Chamberlain met in the distressful Cape Colony. The deputation claimed that it represented the large majority of the people in the Orange River Colony. It did nothing of the sort. The men who came in under the various proclamations, and the others who accepted the new Government and are now anxious to settle down, greatly outnumbered those who hold what appear to be De Wet's views. Some of the men who composed the deputation had returned from Bloemfontein to the Ladybrand district. Of these, two assured me that they had no time to read the address which the deputation presented to Mr. Chamberlain, and that, had they known its contents, they most certainly would not have signed it.

But with all this De Wet is a dangerous man. He

exercises a great influence—which is beginning to wane—over a large section of the ex-burghers, more especially those who served under him, these regarding him as the true patriot, the illustrious general, and the hero of the war. Of all peoples in the world none more implicitly and blindly follow their leaders than do the Boers. The ignorant people—that is, the vast majority—form no opinions of their own, and accept without question the opinions dictated by the educated men in whom they place confidence. If De Wet started a propaganda of mischief thousands who now, if left alone, would be content under British rule, knowing no grievance until it is suggested to them by agitators, would give their entire support to and follow him whithersoever he should choose to lead them. The great influence of a leader over the Boer people, who will work as one man under him, is a fact always to be borne in mind when one is considering the situation in this country. At the present moment mysterious strangers are wandering over the Orange River Colony. They have no ostensible business, but they are observed, in each place they visit, to call at the houses of known irreconcilables, though whether these strangers are the agents of some secret committee or of the Bond itself one cannot say. At any rate, it is certain that there are persons about who are doing their utmost with various malignant lies to poison the minds of the more ignorant.

Here is an example of the way in which every action of the British Government is represented in a false light. We are spending millions to re-establish the people. Some may be grateful for this, but not so the 'wild Boers,' who believe in the falsehoods spread by their better educated fellow-countrymen. Thus a clergyman whom I know put a question to a man in the

Heilbron refuge camp, wishing to discover if the people were in any way grateful for all that the Repatriation Board was doing for them. 'We Boers have no reason to be grateful to Great Britain for all this,' was the reply. 'We know now, for we have been told so by those we can trust, that it is Holland and not Great Britain that is sending us all this food and clothing and that is restocking our farms for us. It is true that the relief comes through the British Government, as otherwise it would not be allowed to reach us, but Great Britain herself has done nothing for us.' We are a curiously tolerant people, and the Dutch have no scruples in abusing our generosity. De Wet himself, when permitted by us to visit one of the refuge camps, took the opportunity of haranguing the people, stirring up their passions and inflaming their hatred against the 'hands-uppers,' of whom a considerable number were among his audience.

But the country is rapidly pacifying, and will probably be wholly pacified ere long if certain leaders will leave the people alone. Still, it must not be forgotten that the people are by no means disarmed. It is certain that quantities of rifles, and possibly cannon, are concealed among the mountains, and when I reached Ficksburg I found that an ex-commandant of the Free State forces was being tried for gun-running into Basutoland. He could have got possession of the guns in one way only—the unearthing of them. In this Ladybrand district I found that things were going very smoothly. The farmers, who were anxious for peace, and had accepted the situation, apparently formed the large majority, and little animosity was displayed against the 'hands-uppers.' Each farmer was hard at work re-establishing himself, and he was leaving politics alone.

The homesteads I passed had evidently been much more substantial and comfortable than are the usual Boer farmhouses, and some must have been handsome residences. All had been wrecked, but the progressive farmers were not sitting down on their ruins waiting to see what the British Government would do for them—as the farmers were doing in some parts of the country. They were energetically putting things right again; repairing the houses in cases where the destruction has not been carried too far; while, where repair was impossible, they were building new homesteads by the side of the ruins of the old.

It is a desirable land, indeed, that I drove across through the pure and bracing highland air. If a farmer from home were dropped down in any part of that dreary country traversed by the railway, whether it were on the arid Karroo or on the treeless plains of this colony, and it were said to him that there lay his promised farm, he would look aghast and feel a keen desire to take the first train and ship back to the Old Country. But if he were placed on almost any spot of this Conquered Territory, which extends over three thousand square miles, he would, I imagine, contentedly exclaim: 'This will do very well for me.' The Land Settlement Board is still looking round for more land on which to settle the right sort of young British farmers, but the sum at the disposal of the board is limited. Far larger funds should be devoted to the furtherance of this admirable scheme. The more fresh British blood we can put on the land here the better. Between the Thabanchu district and the districts of Ficksburg and Senekal, in all of which the Government has acquired a considerable amount of land, lies this Ladybrand district, in which up till now there are no

settlement farms; for the owners of the land are demanding for it prices that are excessive, even allowing for the great appreciation in the value of good farms since the conclusion of the war.

I had a long drive over rough country, so that I had to outspan twice on the way, on the first occasion near the homestead of an ex-burgher whose name and speech betrayed his Scottish origin. I noticed that many of the farms on the Basuto border are held by Scotsmen. The Boers, I am told, were little inclined of old to occupy farms on this borderland, rich as it is, in the face of the perpetual menace of a Basuto rising, which would undoubtedly have meant the massacre of all the white people in these widely separated homesteads. The Scottish settlers, it seems, were prepared to take the risk, got their farms on cheap terms, and have profited greatly. The raid and the massacre have not come to them yet, and are now less likely to occur than ever, though there are forty odd thousand well-armed Basutos on one bank of the river, and on the opposite side a sparse white population wholly disarmed—if one except the possibly buried weapons. I outspanned for the second time, about two hours from Ficksburg, at Schuttes Draai, on the banks of the Caledon, where I found a store and piles of grain and merchandise, the headquarters of Mr. Stephens, the great trader of North Basutoland, even as is Mr. Fraser of the southern half of that country. The Peka Drift here affords communication into Basutoland, and, as I could see by watching the crossing natives, the river could there be forded with the water only knee deep. It was nine o'clock when, guided by a full moon that shone fitfully between the clouds then gathering for a refreshing downpour of rain which fell throughout the

night, we found our way into Ficksburg and to its hotel.

Ficksburg is a straggling little place of about a thousand inhabitants. The Caledon flows below it, and there is a good drift. Not as fortunate as Ladybrand, it suffered severely during the war and has by no means yet recovered. The storekeepers endured heavy losses. They had been led to believe that we intended to occupy the place permanently, so, despite the high rate of transport by ox-waggons through Basutoland, they imported from Port Elizabeth supplies of all sorts for the use of the garrison. Quite unexpectedly came the order for evacuation. The British troops went out, in came the Boer commandos, and everything in the stores was looted. But the inhabitants are cheerful enough despite their troubles, and are very hopeful of the future of the town. The railway, that has perforce to avoid Ladybrand, will pass through Ficksburg, and, as this is not only the centre of a great grain-producing district but also the chief station for the North Basutoland trade, it cannot but attain greatly enhanced importance and prosperity when the line reaches the place. It is proposed also to bridge the Caledon at this point, so that communication will not be interrupted with the native State in time of flood.

A portion of the town looked as if it had been badly shaken by an earthquake; but Ficksburg was gay, though dilapidated, and during my stay there were two public entertainments in the Town Hall, the first by a professional reciter and the second by the local amateur actors. But Ficksburg is an out-of-the-way place, and a letter apparently takes as long to travel from Bloemfontein to the town as it would take from Liverpool to New York. Thus the Bloemfontein paper of

February 9, containing the report of Mr. Chamberlain's speech at the banquet on the 7th, for which we were all anxiously waiting, only reached Ficksburg on the 14th. Mr. Chamberlain's speeches were, of course, at that time, the one absorbing topic of conversation. All that he said and did met with unanimous approval. There was not a British or Dutch loyalist in the Orange River Colony who was not his intense admirer. The 'hands-uppers' regarded him as their saviour, and even the bitterest irreconcilables spoke of him with the highest respect. Talk to whom you would, all men in the colony were full of his praise, and all agreed that his tour through the country had been of inestimable and lasting service to South Africa. It has been the fortune of few men to leave such a memory behind them as Mr. Chamberlain has undoubtedly left here.

I have explained in former chapters that the Repatriation Commissioners work, or were working when I first came into the colony, on different lines in different districts. In the Ficksburg district the scheme seems to have been admirably carried through, and in a way that was satisfactory to all concerned. The assistance of the Repatriation Board was, of course, not intended for the richer farmers, who have the wherewithal to purchase the stock and seed they need to re-establish themselves on their farms, but for the poorer men. These poorer men, whether they were landowners or 'bywoners,' were being treated very generously. At Ficksburg the Board was selling them cattle, sheep, horses, mules, waggon, ploughs, and so forth at cost price, the purchase money to be paid in two years without interest. Of course, this enabled a man to make a start at once on his farm. Very properly,

limits were imposed on the amount of a man's purchases on these easy terms. Thus the Board would not sell more than fifty sheep to one man. If a 'bywoner' applied for assistance to enable him to resume farming, he had to get the farmer on whose land he was about to settle to be security for him. In this district rations were still being issued to the poorer people, who could not yet be placed on the land or be otherwise put in a position to shift for themselves. There were no relief works in the Ficksburg district, and the people thought that the Government would do well if it established a relief camp near the town on the line of the proposed railway. Then, as at the Tweespruit relief camp, the able-bodied indigent could be set to work on the construction of a section of the railway, instead of acquiring the habits of pauperism on free rations as they were then doing. For several reasons it would be good policy for the Government to push on the railway extensions. This would tend to further that reconciliation of which we have heard so much. There would be plenty of well-paid work to be done. Money would be put into circulation. Farmers would be able to bring their produce into the construction camps, to sell it at a good price, and they could supply local transport. They would earn money in various ways, and their minds would be withdrawn from politics to happier subjects, such as the calculation of the wealth they will acquire when the railway comes to their doors. A man who works hard and earns money is in a contented frame of mind, and is far less likely to hatch treason than the man who is not doing well and has ample leisure to muse over his supposed grievances as he smokes in unhappy idleness on his stoep.

CHAPTER XIV

LAND SETTLEMENT IN THE FICKSBURG AND SENEKAL DISTRICTS—A TOUR
AMONG THE FARMERS—THE 'WILD' BOERS—OVER OLD BATTLE-FIELDS
—A TYPICAL 'HANDS-UPPER' FARMER—A RICH LAND—THE BRANDWATER
BASIN—THE FREE-STATERS' LAST STRONGHOLD—INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH
PRO-BOER PRESS DURING THE WAR—SALE OF DUTCH FARMS—SUB-
DIVISION OF LAND—RETIERS' NEK RELICS OF THE WAR.

On February 10 I set out with my cart to visit the settlement farms lying in the districts of Ficksburg and Senekal. The farms that the Board has acquired and divided there are not adjacent, and do not form a compact British colony of settlers, as is the case in the Thabanchu district. They are scattered over an area that is, roughly, seventy miles long by sixty broad, extending from the Basuto border to about twenty-five miles to the north of the township of Senekal. From Ficksburg I first drove twenty-four miles due north to a settlement farm called Kalkoen Krans, where I was to meet Mr. Henry Hanger, the chief agent of the Land Settlement Board. My road wound over great billows of pasture and through the 'neks' of rugged ranges. I passed wrecked farm after wrecked farm, and saw that the people were settling down and beginning to rebuild their homesteads. All the Boers of whom I asked my way were courteous and friendly and ready to talk freely. But here they did not reconcile themselves so soon to the situation as did the farmers of the Ladybrand district. These people were a somewhat intractable folk, and when they came back

to their wrecked homesteads and ruined farms they remained for a while savage and irreconcilable, displaying a disinclination ever to settle down again. As recently as October last they were in that frame of mind, but since then a charge has come over them, and they are now doing their best to re-establish themselves.

On my way I passed several Boers who were driving to their farms the horses and mules they had purchased from the Repatriation Board. This was a wilder part of the country than any I had yet visited. On my right hand rose the rugged ranges that hem in that huge mountain stronghold that gave us so much trouble, the Brandwater Basin, where the Free Staters made their last stand, of which Fouriesburg, the scene of Prinsloo's surrender, is the centre. In this rough mountain country what are now called the 'Wild Boers' are still to be found—men who will not be reconciled, who sulk in the fastnesses, and to whom the burghers who surrendered under the proclamation are objects of intense hatred. Many of the farmers hereabouts took refuge in the mountains with their families and stock, losing little, if anything, during the military operations. The war had not been brought home to them as to the others—hence no doubt their greater bitterness.

I passed the scene of many a skirmish. In some of the valleys the fighting was severe, and I saw the exploded shells still lying round the fallen homesteads. In the course of my journey I crossed Moolman's Spruit, the scene of the last fight of any importance in the war. Here, on April 20, 1902, a small force of Yeomanry and Mounted Infantry under Sir Thomas Fowler—who was among the killed—attacked an isolated farm by night, fell into an ambush, and narrowly escaped an-

nihilation. I reached Kalkoen Krans in the evening and passed the night under canvas in Mr. Hanger's camp. The neighbouring settlement farm belonged to a young Englishman, who was fortunate enough to come into possession of a property whose previous owner had evidently been a fairly progressive farmer; for what remained of the homestead was surrounded by orchards of peaches, figs, and other fruit trees, and a good vegetable garden. Mr. Hanger, an ex-burgher, born in the colony, knowing the Dutch language as well as English, and a practical colonial farmer, is obviously the right man in the right place. It is he who advises what farms in the market should be purchased by the Board, and then subdivides these into settlement farms of from six hundred to seven hundred morgen each, a division that requires much careful consideration and knowledge of local farming conditions, for to each settler must be allotted his fair share of the water supply, of arable land, and so forth.

On the day following my arrival I accompanied Mr. Hanger on a journey still further to the north into the Senekal district, where he had to divide some newly-acquired farms and inspect others that were offered for sale. We had our midday meal on the way at the farm of a hospitable Boer. He was a farmer of the progressive type, and before the war his well-tended domain had been a model one to view. He was now rebuilding his homestead, which had been a comfortable and well-furnished place. He, with his pleasant and comely wife and two stalwart sons, received us with true Boer hospitality, and we fared excellently.

This farmer had fought against us, and had come in under Lord Roberts's proclamation. His two sons had also served with a commando. One of them had

been severely wounded and had just returned from imprisonment in Ceylon. Husband and wife, as I found to be the case with most of these sturdy people, were quite cheery under their losses and pluckily laughed at their misfortunes. And yet here they were, after twenty-three years of married life, during which he had been a well-to-do farmer, starting life afresh in middle age, all their possessions lost with the exception of their land. Like many others hereabouts, this farmer had sold a portion of his land and was restocking the remainder with the proceeds of the sale. He was a good representative of the progressive and better-educated farmers, who entertain no foolish dreams and regard De Wet as the scourge of their country.

Many of the neighbouring farmers, in view of the appreciation of land, which has risen a hundred per cent. since the proclamation of peace, were selling their farms. With the purchase money they were buying other farms in outlying districts where prices were not so high, and they were stocking these fully.

In the evening we went back to our camp of the previous night. On the morrow we returned to Ficksburg by a devious route, to the westward of the one by which I had come, and therefore nearer the mountain range. Here I saw some settlement farms—Berlin and Nooitgedacht, for example—set in the fairest glens imaginable, hollow lands of rich pasture enclosed by the most picturesque of kopjes, delightful farms indeed, some of which are provided with good homesteads surrounded by groves and orchards. A few married men, and their wives and children, were already settled on the better farms, while the other settlers seemed for the most part bent on marrying so soon as they had comfortably established themselves. From what I have

seen of these young settlers they appear to have been well chosen and to be of the right sort, hard working and eager to get on, with men of the best blood in Great Britain among them. In the Ficksburg district at any rate, from what I gathered, the British lady who comes to it with her husband will find herself surrounded by congenial neighbours with whom to associate, even if to our views they do live somewhat far apart.

The Land Settlement Board laid it down that no one with a smaller capital than £500 should be accepted as a Government settler. But in some instances men with less capital have been admitted. I am convinced that no one should start farming here with less than £500—it would be better if he had £1,000. A settler can, of course, do much better if he can remain independent and dispense with advances from the Board. Five hundred pounds is all too little with which to make a start when one bears in mind that one indispensable item alone—the team of sixteen oxen without which the settler cannot plough and conduct his other agricultural operations—will cost him at least £300 as prices now stand.

Having wandered through the length of the Conquered Territory I decided, on leaving Ficksburg, to drive with my Cape cart and mules to Heilbron and take train thence to that centre of South Africa's wealth and civilisation, Johannesburg. To one who, like myself, comes suddenly into the great city after two months' wandering over the open veldt it seems in startling contrast indeed to those sleepy little agricultural villages of about five hundred inhabitants which are the largest aggregations of humanity I came across during my journey by road from the Orange River to the Vaal. The distance from Ficksburg to Heilbron by way of Beth-

lehem and Lindley, the route I followed, is about one hundred and fifty miles. The journey occupied four days, and it was time well spent, for I traversed a most interesting region, differing in many respects from the parts I had up to that point visited.

There is no village on the road between Ficksburg and Bethlehem, so I passed a night at a farm that is nearly half way between the two places. I left Ficksburg on the morning of February 16. I drove by rough roads over a broken country, and crossing Commando Nek entered the beautiful Brandwater Basin, whose rich vales, through which flow the many tributaries of the Brandwater, are enclosed by those grand and rugged mountain ranges that afforded the Boers a secure shelter up to the termination of hostilities. The people there maintain that had it not been for the impregnability of the high mountains that hem in the Brandwater Basin on the north and east, and extend along the banks of the Caledon towards the Transvaal border, the war would have been brought to a conclusion long before it was. Many of the valleys buried in these mountains were never penetrated by our troops. In these the homesteads are still intact, the cattle in them were not captured, and they provided a secure place of concealment for the stock that was driven into them by the farmers occupying the open and unprotected country of the Brandwater Basin and the plains that extend to Bethlehem. Even on the rich pastures of the basin itself the cattle grazed in great numbers during the conflict, and were driven temporarily into the neighbouring mountains when scouts gave notice of the approach of a British column. Many of the farmers returned to their farms after the war richer in cattle than they had ever been before, having looted the stock belonging to surrendered burghers and others.

The war was never brought home to the people of whom I am speaking. They suffered little, if anything, and the proclamation of peace found them in a far better position than any other section of their fellow-countrymen. These men, who did little fighting, but lurked in the mountains until the end of hostilities, still maintain a more irreconcilable attitude than do the other Boers of the colony. These are the 'Wild Boers,' who wear on their breast the white button, with a little bit of black crape at the bottom of it, in mourning for the lost independence of the land. The white button indicates that the wearer is no 'hands-upper,' but held out to the end. The use of this decoration is being gradually abandoned, for the surrendered Boers subject those who wear it to a good deal of ridicule, turning the laugh on those who insultingly dub them the 'hands-uppers' by calling the men who fled to the mountains, instead of fighting and surrendering when the cause was hopeless—the 'hard-loopers' or hard runners. But even in the mountains the 'Wild Boers' are beginning to settle down and their bitterness is subsiding. They apparently bear no animosity against individual Englishmen, and all those I met were courteous and friendly. It is not the subjects of Great Britain but the British Government they regard with ill-will.

That the situation in the region with which I am dealing prolonged the war is very probable; for throughout hostilities the sowing of wheat was uninterrupted in the valleys. Thousands of bushels of wheat were harvested, and the district became the supply base for the Free State commandos. We destroyed crops and stock in vain in the surrounding country, for the Boers were nearly always able to draw as much as they pleased from this mountain fastness. Here the Free State

Government had a complete supply organisation. A portable steam mill was carried up and down the district, grinding wheat for the men in the field, and always successfully evading our columns. During the closing phases of the war, when the British cordon was drawing close, the peripatetic Free State Government had its printing press among these mountains, and from it were turned out the Government 'Gazettes' and the highly satisfactory, if misleading, reports to give heart to the men. I have seen one of these announcements which gave a quotation from a British Pro-Boer paper to show that a majority of the British people at home sympathised with the Boers, and that if the Boers only held out long enough a change of our Government would give them peace with independence. Boer leaders and men who fought under them have themselves told me that extracts from certain British papers were repeatedly read out to the commandos. There is not the slightest doubt that the British Pro-Boer section is responsible for a vast amount of needless bloodshed and suffering. Anyone who goes out to South Africa from Great Britain and realises the mischief that has been wrought by the faction mentioned will find it impossible either to forget or to forgive.

The farm where I passed the night belonged to Mr. Middleton, a young settler who bought it from the Land Settlement Board. He had only recently come into possession of it, and I found him hard at work with his Kaffirs rebuilding the wrecked homestead and repairing the dam. The farm is on a height near the Brandwater River, and commands a magnificent view over the whole Brandwater Basin, the background to the north and east being formed by the grand mountain range that encloses that basin; and there I saw before

me peaks and passes that have become historical because of the fighting that took place in their neighbourhood. There, for instance, was Kaffir's Kop, for long the centre of Boer activity, under whose shadow many of our slain soldiers are buried; there, too, were Slabbert's Nek and Retief's Nek, the two deep gaps in the range that afford an entrance to the basin from the plains beyond, the key of the position for which we fought when we were hemming in the doomed commandos of Prinsloo.

On my way to the farm, and while crossing the basin, I noticed that the greater number of the roofless and gutted homesteads were still as the war had left them. I did not see the people rebuilding and repairing on every farm as I had seen them in the Ladybrand district. It was obvious that many of the farmers had not yet returned to their land. I passed farm after farm that was abandoned. There were no people camping among the ruins and there was no stock nor cultivation. The Brandwater Basin contains some of the best farming land in the colony, and it is to be hoped that the Land Settlement Board will be able to purchase more farms there on which to settle the young British men of the class I met during my tour among the settlement farms. That more land will come into the market later on is highly probable. Many Dutch farmers will find themselves compelled to sell their land, and that for reasons wholly unconnected with the war. The fact is that the Boer farming system is altogether unsuited to modern conditions. Of old there was an abundance of unoccupied land in the country. The farmer could always send his sons trekking into the wilderness to peg out new lots for themselves. But now practically all the land is occupied. The cutting off of the Boers from

the north, their only outlet left, by Mr. Rhodes when he grasped Mashonaland and Matabeleland, appeared to them an immeasurable calamity.

Every Boer wishes his sons to be farmers after him, and, in accordance with a custom that is stronger than law, his land at his death is divided among all his children. It therefore behoves a man to increase his holding as his family increases, so that he may leave a farm of sufficient size to each child. This was easy enough to do in the days when waste lands were plentiful, but it is quite another matter now. Many a Boer, urged by the hereditary land-hunger of his race, and in order to provide for his descendants, purchases more land than he can himself possibly farm. His usual method is to mortgage his original farm, and to buy another with the borrowed money. He will then mortgage his newly-acquired property in order to make further land purchases, and so on. He pays to the banks in the form of interest far more than he can hope to make from farming the land with his usually primitive methods, and as his holding increases his capital and income steadily decrease. This state of things has now reached its limit. To a large number of the farmers the banks will lend no more, and in some cases, alarmed for their security, are foreclosing the mortgages. Thus many a large landowner will be compelled to sell a portion of his property, and the wiser men are selling now to profit by the extraordinary increase in the value of land since the war, for it is not expected that the present prices will be maintained. The Boers are opposed to work, but they must soon realise that in view of the increase of the population the sons of farmers cannot all be farmers, and that an ever-increasing number must seek other occupations. The subdivision of the land has

reached its limits in many districts. In the old times a man was allowed to peg out a square farm, any one side of which being the distance he could walk his horse in forty minutes. An old settler told me—and the maps that were used before the war confirm his statement—that twenty-five years ago 8,000 morgen was the usual size of a farm in the Bethlehem district, some farms being as many as 18,000 morgen, and that taking large with small 5,000 morgen was the average size. But the Boer generally has six or seven children, and the result of the divisions and subdivisions is that now the average size of the farms in the district of which I am speaking is 700 morgen. The partition can now go no further; a farm of 200 morgen—and there are many such in the country—cannot support a family. It comes to this: the Boers must cease to be a purely farming people, for soon only a small minority of them will be able to live on the land.

Having passed the night at Mr. Middleton's farm I drove on the following day to Bethlehem, about thirty miles distant. I crossed the Brandwater and passed through the mountain range by Retief's Nek, the strong pass from which General Hunter drove the Boers when our columns were converging to cut off Prinsloo's retreat and compel his surrender at Fouriesburg. I outspanned on the bleak summit of the pass to give the mules their midday rest. From this wind-swept gap I had on one side of me a fine view over the Brandwater Basin, and on the other side a splendid prospect over undulating grassy veldt that sank far off into the western plains forming the horizon—a faint blue line appearing like a distant sea. On the very summit of the nek is a relic of the war that struck me by its pathetic desolation. For here at this bleak and lonely spot stood the ruins of

what had evidently once been a substantial stone house. It was roofless, with the long grass growing on the floors of its empty chambers. Half the stout walls had fallen to the ground, and these were surrounded by the wreck of a once delightful garden, still beautiful, with roses and other flowering bushes in full blossom rising above the tangle of weeds. Hard by were the remains of the Boer entrenchments that guarded the pass, and the ground was still strewn with empty cartridges. During my long journey by road throughout the length of this colony I never outspanned, even at the most out-of-the-way spots, without seeing around me cartridges, whether of British or Boer, to show how widespread had been the fighting in this devastated country.

I passed the night in Bethlehem, a little village of 500 inhabitants or thereabouts. It has not suffered as much as most of the places I have visited, despite the constant fighting that took place round it, and despite its capture by the forces of Clements and Paget after a vigorous defence on the part of the Boers. The Royal Irish stormed the ridge that overlooks the town, the centre of the enemy's position, and compelled the rapid abandonment of the place by the enemy.

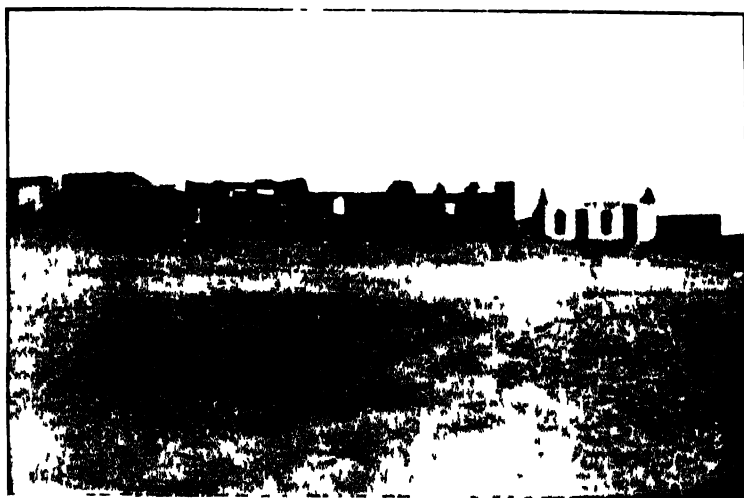
CHAPTER XV

LAND IN THE BETHLEHEM DISTRICT - LINDLEY - A TOWN OF RUINS - A RETURNED PRISONER FROM CEYLON - A POLITICAL MEETING - HARMONY BETWEEN THE TWO RACES - FAITH IN MR. CHAMBERLAIN - REGARDING CLAIMS - A BOER RECEIPT FACTORY BRITISH GENEROSITY ABUSED - HEILBRON - CONCLUSION OF A LONG TRIP

I PUT up at the hotel at Bethlehem for the night, and on the following day drove about thirty-five miles across the veldt to Lindley. I had now left the mountain region behind me, and throughout the day I traversed great grassy plains, broken occasionally by the billowy heights, between which wound the steep channels of the spruits. The Land Settlement Board is now acquiring farms in this part of the country; for here the rainfall, though not quite as regular as it is in the Conquered Territory, is sufficient to allow of the cultivation of wheat without irrigation. To the westward of Lindley that is not possible, and, indeed, as I got further from the mountains I noticed that the green veldt gradually changed in colour until in the neighbourhood of Lindley itself it had the brown tinge that told of many rainless days. But for many miles to the westward of Bethlehem the land is admirably adapted for agriculture, and is worth more per morgen than most of the land in the Conquered Territory; for, unlike the Conquered Territory, it is free from rocky waste land, and a plough can be run through the ground for leagues in a straight line without encountering an obstacle. The soil is not so rich as the black loam that

is found in many of the valleys of the mountain region, but is very good, as the abundant wheat crops that were raised here before the war sufficiently proved. But it was a lonely and desolate country which I was traversing, that had been laid waste over and over again during the long war. There were but small patches of crops, little wheat had been sown, and every one of the scattered homesteads was roofless and in ruins. The prolonged drought had been broken at last. For some days showers had fallen at intervals, and throughout the day, as I drove across the bare steppes, fierce squalls from the north-west drove sheets of rain over the land, some of these striking us with such violence that the mules could not face them. We had, therefore, to turn the back of the cart to the storm and wait until it had passed over us.

It was about an hour before sunset when, on topping a steep ridge, I opened out an extraordinary scene. There, lying beneath me, was what once had been the township of Lindley. There are but few trees in the village, and its houses are scattered over a slight depression in the undulating desolate veldt—a cheerless-looking spot at the best of times, but now I saw that there was not one building in the whole village that was not roofless, gutted by fire, with its walls fallen in. I had seen many wrecked villages in the course of my journey through the colony, but nowhere had the destruction been so complete as here. The few people remaining in the place were living in tents or in lean-tos formed by laying sheets of bullet-riddled corrugated iron—the remains of the former roofs—against the walls that happened to be still standing. In the centre of the large square round which the houses are grouped stood the bare blackened walls of what had been the handsome



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Dutch church. Of the Wesleyan chapel not one stone had been left on another. What had been the public buildings were but heaps of rubble. Where once the streets had been the ground was strewn with scraps of corrugated iron, charred timber, bricks, and other wreckage, and most of the crumbling walls had been blackened by fire.

Lindley, besieged and taken, lost again and retaken, occupied and looted in turns by British and Boers, the scene of constant fighting, had suffered a good deal in the war; but its final and complete destruction came in October, 1901. During the 15th and 16th of that month our troops were engaged in firing the houses, and all the stores and furniture within them were given to the flames.

I drove into what had once been Lindley, for a few days capital of the Orange Free State and the seat of its peripatetic Government; and at first, seeing no people about, I thought that it must be deserted as well as ruined. But at last I came across a small Dutch boy, and asked him the way to the hotel. He pointed out to me a collection of half fallen-in, charred walls, the skeleton of what had probably been a large and comfortable inn. But here among the ruins I found a pleasant Boer who was managing the place. He told me that he could give me accommodation. Temporary roofing had been placed over some of the outer sheds, forming little rooms in which travellers could get lodging and could eat their meals, while a tent was pitched in the courtyard amid the heaps of wreckage. Of the dining-room, billiard-room, and other chambers of the hotel only part of the walls remained. It was a weird inn, but nowhere have I been more comfortable. As I had to make a halt at some place before entering

the Transvaal, in order to write for the home-going mail, to rest my mules and to have them shod, I selected Lindley for this purpose, and I stayed there for two days.

‘I have seen you before,’ said my host, smiling, as soon as I came up to him, ‘but I do not suppose you will remember me. My name is Cronjé. I was a war prisoner in Ceylon, and was acting as a camp officer at Diatawala. I showed you the curios the prisoners had made, when you went round the camp with Colonel Vincent.’ Then I remembered him well, for we had met, even as he said, when I visited Diatawala Camp during the cruise of the ‘Ophir.’ He was not the only man I had met before who recognised me in Lindley, for Müller, the village blacksmith, who shod my mules, had also been a prisoner at Diatawala, and was one of those with whom I there conversed. The population of Lindley had numbered about four hundred, but now not more than fifty were inhabiting this heap of ruins. Among these fifty I found several English old public-school boys and university men who were acting as claims-officers or in other official capacities.

On the night of my arrival I was present at a meeting held by Mr. Wilson, who had gone to Bloemfontein, as representative of the Lindley district, with the deputation that met Mr. Chamberlain. He now put before his fellow-citizens the results of the deputation’s conference with the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Nearly all the men in the town were present. The majority were Boers, and among them was Commandant Olivier, who fought to the end of the war and took part in the Vereeniging Conference. He is the brother of the other Commandant Olivier who gave us so much trouble until he was captured outside Winburg, and

whom I had met in Ceylon. Mr. Wilson, like all the other deputies I have come across, was greatly pleased with the reception that Mr. Chamberlain had given to the deputation, and he explained to those assembled the information regarding the settlement of claims, compensation, and other matters that had been communicated to the deputation by the Colonial Secretary. Both Dutch and British put questions to Mr. Wilson until all had arrived at a fairly clear understanding of the situation. It was a perfectly harmonious meeting, and both British and Dutch seemed to be quite satisfied with Mr. Chamberlain's decisions. The complete confidence which the ex-burghers of the Free State placed in Mr. Chamberlain, their faith in his wisdom, and the honest admiration with which all in the country—with the exception of a handful of extremists—regarded him were pleasant to observe and argued well for the future of the country. The people now believed in the good intentions of the British Government. Both at this meeting and later on while mixing with the townspeople, I was much struck by the wonderful accord that prevailed in the Lindley district between British and Boers. Apparently the reconciliation of the races had already been realised by these dwellers in the ruins.

All the British in Lindley fought for our flag during the war, while every Dutchman did battle for his country. Here I found these men, who had been fighting against each other, often in the same battle, but a few months before, all on the best of terms. They discussed the war and their mutual experiences in the most friendly fashion. They were partners in business, and it is no exaggeration to say that, in the place of which I am speaking, British and Boers appeared to have become as one race. I heard nothing of bitterness

of feeling, and the hatchet had indeed been buried in the ruins of Lindley. All this was pleasing to notice ; and thus might it be throughout South Africa, even in the Cape Colony itself, if those men who intrigue, though they never fought, would leave the people alone. The most dangerous of the mischief-makers are the British renegades, men who in Capetown and Bloemfontein stir up the hatred of the people against the ' hands-uppers,' and otherwise keep alive strife and bitterness.

The statements made by Mr. Chamberlain with regard to the system that would be adopted in dealing with claims were received with great satisfaction. His words have made thousands of people happy and hopeful who despaired of ever obtaining the compensation due to them, in view of the utter confusion that prevailed in the bodies appointed for the settlement of these matters. There is no doubt that numbers of just claims were unfairly dealt with, but all these are now to be reconsidered.

On one occasion during the war, for example, it was notified that all claims had to be sent in within thirty days or they would be disregarded. Now many whose stock of grain had been requisitioned were at that time serving with British columns and were unable to make out and send in their claims within the stipulated period. When at last they sent them to the proper quarters the claims were disallowed. Again, one would have supposed that a receipt given by a British officer for grain requisitioned was worth its face value ; but I may recount one out of many cases tending to show that some officials took another view. An ex-burgher, of British blood, who was of great service to us throughout the war—on several occasions going out at the risk of his life to convey the peace proposals to the com-

mandos—at the request of one of our generals supplied a quantity of grain to the military authorities, transporting it at his own cost and risk through Basutoland. The sum of £600 was the perfectly fair price agreed on, and the man was given a receipt for this amount. When he sent in his claim, with the receipt attached, he received a letter informing him that by a certain date he would get a cheque for £240 in full satisfaction of his account. But these claims are to be reconsidered, and people who lost everything they possessed are hopeful once more, confident that Mr. Chamberlain has so arranged matters that there will be a just settlement.

Mr. Chamberlain's statement to the effect that a commission of British officers, assisted by the resident magistrates, would deal with the claims for compensation pleased everybody to whom I spoke on the subject. As I have stated, the one grievance of the 'bywoners' whom I met on the road was the appointment of Dutchmen as compensation and repatriation officers. It was maintained that the Dutch officials would favour their own friends, whereas British officers would be impartial, and do their utmost to be absolutely fair. It is not without reason that British farmers, whom I know, refused to send in their claims to the local boards because these were composed of Dutchmen whom they could not trust. There is no doubt that some of our recent foemen, whom we placed in responsible positions, have abused our confidence. A regular secret receipt factory had been established in the country at which ex-burghers who wished to put in claims for the requisitions made on them by Boer commandants during the war were provided with properly filled in receipts to attach to their claims. These

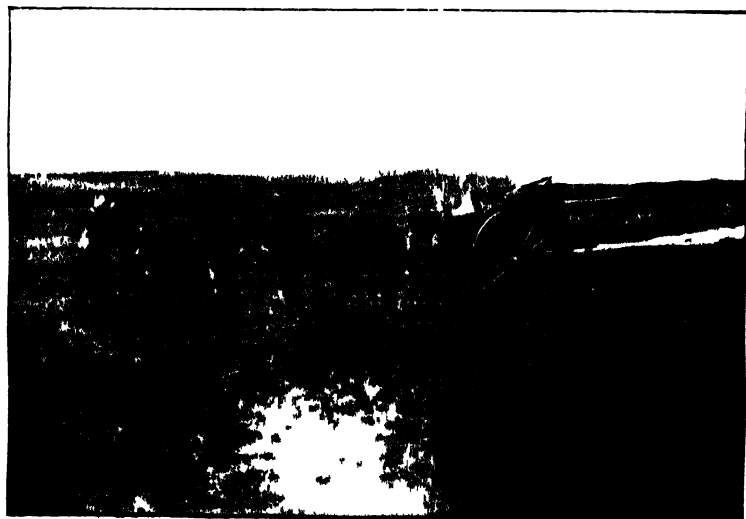
receipts were signed by ex-Boer commandants, who antedated them so as to convey the impression that they were drawn up at the time of the alleged acts of requisitioning.

Many ex-burghers who remained in the field to the end, or who were taken prisoners, and therefore not entitled to compensation under Lord Roberts's proclamation, are employing lawyers to draw out their claims. This will probably prove to have been a sheer waste of money on their part, for it seems doubtful if many of this class of claimants will receive anything. They are entitled to their share of the three millions that was granted for the purpose, and this sum will probably be divided *pro rata* among those whose claims are approved. But these people have already received considerable assistance from the Repatriation Board, which has disbursed enormous sums. The price of everything that has been advanced to a man by the board will, of course, be deducted from what he will receive as his portion of the three millions. This is likely to leave him a very small balance, if any; and it is estimated that the sum that will ultimately have to be divided will be comparatively insignificant.

With regard to the Repatriation Board, there is no doubt that many availed themselves of its assistance who had no right to do so. Quite rich men, for example, have been drawing rations. It was recognised that the distribution of rations to the able-bodied should be stopped as soon as possible, for it was rapidly pauperising a section of the community. A Boer loathes regular work, and considers it somewhat beneath his dignity to work under another man for hire. But now that the Boers are becoming too numerous for the land to support them they must labour like other white men,



INTERIOR OF THE HOTEL LINDLEY



MY CAPE CART

and the present is a good opportunity for putting them in the way of acquiring the habit of working. A repatriation officer told me that he had offered 10s. a day to a man to do some light work for him on a farm. The man refused to undertake the duty. He preferred to sit in idleness, as was quite natural, and to draw his free rations. I say free rations because, though the recipients are supposed to pay for them some day, no one supposes that they will ever do so, and it is certainly not their intention to save up for that purpose.

From Lindley I drove across the veldt with my Cape cart and mules to the railway at Heilbron, forty miles distant. The long drought had broken at last, for throughout the day we drove under a never-ceasing downpour of rain, and terrific thunderstorms swept across the plain, which in places soon became covered with water several inches in depth, presenting the appearance of a succession of large lakes. As we could not see the submerged tracks, it was with difficulty that we found our way, while the spruits that had been dry the previous day had become torrents almost too deep to ford. But at last we saw Heilbron far off in front of us, and before nightfall we passed the Repatriation Camp—a great collection of waggons, piles of stores, animals, and supplies intended for distribution among the distressed farmers—that lies outside the town, and drove through the empty swamped streets to the hotel. It will be remembered that this little township was for a week the capital of the Orange Free State during the peripatetic period of Mr. Steyn's dying Government. The district was the centre of the long-continued stubborn resistance of the Free State commandos during the closing stages of the war, and there was plenty of

severe fighting round Heilbron. Here many ex-burghers were still wearing the white button to show that they were among those that held out to the end; but, as elsewhere in the colony, the British and Dutch were getting on well together, there being little bitterness apparent.

Here I concluded my long and pleasant journey through the Orange River Colony, and took train to Johannesburg. I had trekked from one end of the colony to the other, from the Orange River to the Vaal, having covered about six hundred miles of road, while zig-zagging backwards and forwards between the Basuto frontier and the railway. I had traversed the districts which suffered most in the war, which supplied the most formidable commandos to the Boer forces. Throughout the journey I had mixed with all sorts and conditions of men, but had met with nothing but hospitality and friendship from our late enemies. Old experiences had taught me that, whatever their faults, there are no pleasanter people to travel among than the South African Dutch, and even as they were before the war so I found them now.

CHAPTER XVI

JOHANNESBURG — UNDESIRABLES — HIGHWAY ROBBERY — A CHERRY COMMUNITY — DEPRESSION OF TRADE — RENEGADE ENGLISHMEN — THE TRANSVAAL VOLUNTEERS — DEFENCE OF THE NATIONAL SCOUTS

JOHANNESBURG, in contrast with the little war-wrecked veldt townships I had left behind, seemed a wonderful city indeed, with its teeming eager life, its broad streets of handsome buildings, its fine shops, its fashionably-dressed men and women, its smart private équipages, its many signs of wealth and luxury. It was curious to note how much more British in appearance Johannesburg had become since the war; the first striking sign of our rule that meets the traveller as he leaves the railway station being the courteous British policemen in the streets—all time-expired soldiers, chiefly Guardsmen—regulating the traffic as they do in London, and clad in the familiar garb of our home constables, taking the place of Mr. Kruger's lounging, often impudent zarps, who, to do them credit, fought pluckily against us in the war.

Johannesburg appeared to be a very well policed city. I came across no disorderliness by day or night. Many undesirables had recently been banished, and there were no outward signs of that dangerous condition which prevailed but a short time ago, when there was an organised ruffianism of the 'Hooligan' type and people were sandbagged by robbers in broad daylight. But of undesirables of many nationalities there

is still an abundance in Johannesburg, and many of the ill-clad, unkempt men who loaf or stand at street corners with their hands in their pockets, sullenly scanning the well-dressed ladies and gentlemen who pass, are as forbidding in appearance as any to be seen in the worst quarters of European capitals. People of this description have somehow contrived to obtain permits to enter the Transvaal, whereas many quite respectable people have been excluded.

But the ruffians of the city are quiet in demeanour, never, so far as I observed, rowdy, for they know well that to put themselves too much in evidence would be to ensure their expulsion from the colony as undesirables under the arbitrary provisions of the Peace Preservation Act. But desperados, silently and unobtrusively, observe the habits of the mercantile classes, note the hours at which the clerk is sent to the bank with his bag of gold, or when the takings are carried from the booking-offices of the theatres, and then cleverly plan their *coups*. The boldest outrage that has been committed of late occurred when I was in the city, and it recalled to one's mind the old days in Australia when bushrangers used to hold up the banks of little townships in broad daylight. At four in the afternoon two Custom House officials were sent to the bank with that day's Customs takings, amounting to a little under £5,400, chiefly in notes. When turning the corner of frequented Bree Street they were suddenly blinded by handfuls of pepper thrown at them by one of three men who were awaiting them. A second confederate struck the bearer of the bag of money on the forehead, while the third—a young man smartly dressed in black jacket, dust coat, and riding breeches, with puttie gaiters and spurs, the new fashion for your South

African highwayman—snatched the bag, and, mounting his horse, which was standing near, dashed down the street at full gallop. The hue and cry was raised, but the man would probably have escaped had not a gentleman named Brandon pluckily rushed at the horse's head. He was knocked down by the animal, but succeeded in unseating the rider, who took to his heels, to be shortly afterwards captured as he endeavoured to force his way through a house. Mr. Brandon died the same evening from the injuries he had received, so the prisoner had to undergo his trial for murder as well as for highway robbery.

The expected 'boom' has failed to come, and Johannesburg is suffering in consequence. One is told that trade is depressed, that the mining industry, the mainstay of the land, has not recovered, that men are losing money, that many are living on their capital, awaiting an improvement in the condition of things, that the failures of once wealthy men are imminent, and that banks are refusing accommodations. That may be so, but I perceived no outward signs of this distressful situation. Business men were as cheery as ever, and money was still being spent as freely as of old in this dearest of the world's cities. It was as much as ever an extravagant pleasure city in the intervals of its gold-seeking and in three theatres English companies were playing nightly to crowded houses; while on Sunday nights, too, the Hebrew Oriental Opera Company, which contains some excellent actors, played to full houses of the Jewish community in the Yiddish tongue. These Jewish actors perform such Scriptural dramas as 'King Saul and David' in a singularly realistic and impressive way. I was present one Sunday night at the performance of 'The Jewish King Lear,' a

strange modernised version of Shakespeare's tragedy. The scene is laid in Russia. King Lear is a wealthy Russian Jew, and all the costumes for the piece have been brought from Moscow. Taibele, Etele, and Gitel represent Regan, Goneril, and Cordelia. Charif, Lear's eldest son-in-law, is the arch-villain of the piece. The play ends happily, Jaffe, the tutor, and lover of Lear's youngest daughter, becomes a celebrated oculist and cures the heart-broken father of his blindness. Lear, restored to sight and brought back to his home, forgives his ungrateful eldest daughters, and the curtain falls on a general reconciliation.

There is a curious fascination in mingling with this bustling cosmopolitan population, which resembles no other in the world, composed of men who, though of various race, tongue, and creed, are all of them—from the smart mining magnate down to the slouching 'undesirable'—united in one aim, the fierce race for gold. Here Mammon is god to all. As the Johannesburg police will tell you, there is no city in the civilised world which contains so large a proportion of dangerous criminals of all nationalities. And, on the other hand, in no city of its size will you find so many men of the highest intelligence. On the faces of the prosperous-looking men who throng the business streets you see capacity, energy, determination strongly marked. Among them you will observe faces of born leaders of men, who might have been great statesmen had they not been successful speculators. That many are magnificent organisers all the world knows. Johannesburgers sometimes boast, and not without reason, that theirs is the 'brainiest' city in South Africa. When responsible government is given to the Transvaal the sittings of its Parliament will be interesting to watch,

for of clever orators and of able statesmen to guide its policy there should be no lack. At any rate, it is not likely to be a stupid assembly. There is a briskness of life here that has an inexpressible charm for the stranger. The moral atmosphere is like champagne. For its agreeable society and the open hospitality of its citizens Johannesburg is justly famous. It is true that the men are so busy money-making that, with the exception of a small minority, which, however, is steadily growing, the cultivation of literature is somewhat neglected. The latest best books apparently have little sale here, and if one may judge from the windows of the booksellers' shops third-rate sensational novels are the favourite reading.

Despite the depression of trade, the usual cheeriness pervades the business world of Johannesburg. There is little of that discontent which occupies the leisure of some of the communities of this country. Here men have no time to growl and conspire as they do in lazy Dutch townships in the Cape Colony. So far as the British element is concerned, this is a very loyal and patriotic community, that most mischievous of all South Africa's products, the renegade Englishman, not being tolerated. I am sorry to say that in many places I know of he talks treason openly, though at times he does get a snubbing or worse. He generally affects a supercilious manner, and is a strange and a highly-objectionable combination of ineffable conceit, sly malice, and crass ignorance. He is far more bitter than the most irreconcilable Boer, and, as a rule, has thrown in his lot with those who hate Great Britain because it pays him to do so. One is loth to confess the unpleasant fact that these renegades are quite numerous in some parts of South Africa. But the British on the Rand

are true, and the brilliant record of the Imperial Light Horse proves that none can fight more stoutly for their country in time of need. Now that the war is over they are gladly coming forward to join the Volunteer corps that have recently been raised for the protection of the country in the event of a Kaffir rising or other contingency. The Volunteer movement is a most important one in view of the Government's intention to reduce the South African Constabulary.

This Volunteer force will certainly be a most serviceable one, seeing that the bulk of the officers and men served with the irregular corps throughout the late war. The mounted Volunteer corps are the direct successors of the irregular Mounted Infantry corps that fought in the war, and they bear the old names now so famous. These are the Imperial Light Horse, the South African Light Horse, the Johannesburg Mounted Rifles, and the Scottish Horse. This perpetuation of the titles of the corps that did such good service gives a great prestige to the Transvaal Volunteer force, and men are naturally proud to serve again with the old regiments and by the side of comrades of the long war. The Infantry force is composed of the Central South African Railways Volunteer Corps, which is practically an engineer corps and has two armoured trains, the Transvaal Light Infantry Volunteers, the Transvaal Scottish Volunteers, and the Railway Pioneer Volunteer Regiment.

The Volunteer movement was practically initiated when the Rand Rifles were raised during the war for the defence of the Witwatersrand. By the proclamation which established this force in November 1900, no British subject was granted a permit to stay on the Rand unless he agreed to be enrolled in the Rand Rifles

and to make himself efficient in shooting and elementary drill. Twenty-two thousand men in all were enrolled in the force, which was organised and disciplined by a staff of nine officers, most of whom were drawn from the Regular army. At the conclusion of hostilities compulsory enrolment ceased and the Rand Rifles became a purely Volunteer force. In October last the force was disbanded, and as the result of the deliberations of a committee, of which Major-General Oliphant was president, the Volunteer Ordinance was issued on October 31, empowering the raising of the existing Transvaal Volunteer force with its corps of Mounted Infantry, Engineers, Infantry, and Medical Staff Corps. The corps are under the general at the time commanding in the Transvaal and Orange River Colonies, but the sanction to form new corps, the appointment of officers, the financial direction, &c., rest with the Lieutenant-Governor, acting for the Governor. The force, when complete, will number 10,000 men. The Imperial Government has made a gift to the force of 10,000 rifles, and clothing and equipment have also been granted without charge. At the conclusion of the war Lord Kitchener gave 500 horses to each of the mounted corps. At the beginning of this year the strength of the force was over 1,300 mounted men and about 800 Infantry. Enlistment, I was informed, was proceeding rapidly, the average weekly increase being 320, so it was expected that within a short time the full complement would be obtained.

The term of service is one year. The Volunteer is liable for service anywhere in the Transvaal. If a mounted man, he has to attend a camp for six days yearly; if an Infantryman, for three days. The capitulation grant is £6 and £5 for the mounted soldier and

Infantry soldier respectively. Allowances are given at the rate of £18 a year for a horse and £2 for a bicycle. A Volunteer enjoys various privileges. He is exempt from poll-tax and service on juries. He travels at half-rates on the Government railways when in uniform and holding a pass signed by his immediate commanding officer. When living in or near towns he can purchase forage from the Government at reasonable rates. The pay of a Volunteer when on active service ranges from 30s. a day for a lieutenant-colonel to 5s. a day, with free rations and forage, for the private soldier. The system seems to be working excellently, and the service is popular. The many Scots in Johannesburg are exceedingly proud of their Scottish Horse Volunteer Corps, whose headquarters are in this city. This fine corps is the re-establishment as a Volunteer regiment of the splendid Scottish Horse which was raised by the Marquis of Tullibardine at the suggestion of the Caledonian Society of Johannesburg, and even at that time the Marquis had it in his mind to effect the continuation of the life of the corps in its present form so soon as the Government should decide to establish a Volunteer force in the Transvaal. The Transvaal will soon possess a formidable little army of loyal British seasoned in war. The success of the Volunteer movement seems now assured. The railway men and miners are enlisting in numbers, and the directors and managers of the gold-mining groups have built horse-stalls for the use of Volunteers working on their properties, and also assist them in obtaining forage at cost price.

While I was in Johannesburg I conversed with many men—mining engineers, prospectors, commercial travellers and others—who had recently travelled all

over the colony. All these assured me that when I began to trek through the Transvaal I should find the people settling down quietly, even as I found them in the Orange River Colony ; that here, too, British and Boers were working together in harmony, and that little bitterness was manifested, except perhaps among the ' Wild Boers ' of the remote bush veldt. But, according to them, throughout the colony the National Scouts were regarded by the Dutch population with a hatred so intense that it was doubtful if they would be able to remain in the country. Even in Great Britain, if one may judge from what is said in some of the papers, there is a tendency to despise these scouts who fought for us and to deny them all sympathy. Do people at home realise that a cruel persecution compelled these men to take up arms against their own countrymen, and that they took this step in order to protect their wives and children ? Of course, I cannot speak for the motives of all the men who joined the ranks of the National Scouts ; but I have met some of them who have given me the following explanation of their conduct, and what they say is corroborated by the records of what happened. They had fought against us as long as there was any hope of a successful issue for their cause, and at last, realising that the continuation of hostilities was futile and could but lead to the complete ruin of the country, surrendered under one or other of the British proclamations, and were permitted to remain on their farms under our protection. But, as all know, we were unable to afford them the promised protection. War once more swept over the already pacified districts, and the Boers who carried on the mad guerilla war avenged themselves on their surrendered fellow-countrymen, destroyed their homesteads, carried off their cattle

and crops, maltreated them in every way, and in some cases murdered them. Here is an example of what the 'hands-uppers' had to endure. The Boers on one occasion came to the unprotected Sand Spruit refuge camp, deliberately murdered a refugee and his son, and opened fire on the camp, which was crowded with women and children. It was crime of that kind which drove many of the surrendered to take up arms on our side during the guerilla war, their object being to put an end to the terrible state of things as soon as possible. It was the Boers in the field who in the first place treated the 'hands-uppers' as an enemy, and they have themselves to blame if some of these men under so great a provocation offered their services to us as National Scouts. I found later that the feeling against the National Scouts was gradually becoming less bitter in the Transvaal.

CHAPTER XVII

THE NATIVE LABOUR QUESTION—NUMBERS OF AVAILABLE KAFFIRS—DIVERS VIEWS—CHINESE LABOUR—A MANUFACTURED AGITATION—POSITION OF THE KAFFIR—SUGGESTED INDUCEMENTS TO KAFFIR LABOURERS—VIEWS OF THE MINE MANAGERS—BRITISH NAVVIES—COMPARATIVE COST OF WHITE AND BLACK LABOUR—THE PAMPERED KAFFIR.

THE native labour question is the burning one on the Rand at present, as, indeed, it is throughout South Africa. Those sentimentalists in Great Britain who are of opinion that their fellow-countrymen in this climate change their nature and degenerate into brutal slave-drivers apparently consider that this question concerns the gold-mining interest almost exclusively. The truth is that the condition of the Kaffir labour market affects every industry in the land. The prosperity of the entire white population, including the white artisans, depends on the sufficiency of Kaffir labour. The Kaffirs employed on the mines form but a small percentage of those who serve us in various capacities on farms, on railways, as servants, as carriers, and so forth. But, to deal with the Rand alone for the moment, it may be said that some of those who are now discussing this vital question on the platform and in the Press at home apparently do not realise to what a great number of their fellow-countrymen out in South Africa the full working of the gold mines signifies a livelihood. Tens of thousands of white men, directly or indirectly, depend on that industry, and to check the influx of native labour, as some theorists would like to do, would

bring destitution to the bulk of the white population of the Transvaal. Gold-mining is not like coal-mining. It does not consist merely of the extraction of the ore from the reef; for after the extraction comes the complicated treatment of the ore necessitating a vast amount of skilled labour that is beyond the capacity of the black man. In order to realise how various and far-reaching are the industries involved in the working of the Rand mines one should picture to oneself an English country crowded with coal mines, cotton mills, and chemical works.

Here are some figures that will make clear what the Rand means to the British artisans. Just before the war there were working on these mines 97,800 natives and 12,413 white men, the natives receiving in wages about £234,000 a month and the white men £332,620. The white men therefore were earning among them just under four millions a year, the European on the average receiving twelve times the pay of the Kaffir. Since then the proportion between the number of Kaffirs and white men on the mines has been reduced, in December last the numbers being 40,745 Kaffirs and 10,292 white men. Of course, in addition to those directly employed on the mines, there is also on the Rand a large army of other white men whose livelihood depends absolutely, if indirectly, on the prosperity of the mining industry.

Men hold a variety of views on the labour question, but on one point nearly all those who have carefully considered the subject are in agreement. This is that though white men can be employed in this country as navvies on railway construction and irrigation works, and even in the coal mines, it is an economic impossibility to employ unskilled white labour on the gold

mines ; for the cost of it is prohibitive and must remain so as long as the high price of the necessities of life justifies the white man's high rate of wages. The average value of ore per ton on the Rand is forty-two shillings, and it is only with cheap unskilled labour that this can be made to pay. The leaders of the Labour Party in the Transvaal advocated the employment of white men alone, even for the unskilled work on the mines. If they had their way the bulk of the mines would have to be shut down at once, as they could only be worked at a loss. There are signs to show that the white miners are beginning to realise their true interests. The proportion of white men to natives on the mines at present is roughly as one to five, the white men performing the skilled work and superintending the Kaffirs. Those who, by the imposition of restrictions, would prevent the colonies from obtaining an adequate supply of native labour forget that by such action they would injure the white artisans, whom it is their intention to assist. An increase in the number of the native labourers on the Rand, making possible the fuller working of the mines, would bring with it a proportionate increase of the number of the white labourers. Thus, for every five Kaffirs who are recruited for the mines another white man would be required.

The supply of Kaffirs on the mines is, of course, at present wholly insufficient. With regard to the important question as to whether or not it will be possible to obtain from the native population an adequate supply to meet the ever-increasing demand, opinions differ widely. From apparently equally well-informed people one gathers that the Kaffirs, if wisely treated, can supply all the labour that is needed ; and, on the other hand, that the whole of South Africa does not

contain a sufficiency of natives for our purposes, the introduction of Chinese labour being held to be inevitable.

Here are some figures communicated to me by one whose opinion carries weight, and who has reluctantly come to the conclusion that Chinese labour will ultimately have to be employed : In 1899, before the war, nearly 98,000 Kaffirs were working on the Rand mines, a number that was insufficient, it being estimated that 150,000 were needed. Since the war a considerable increase in the number of deep-level mines has been shown to be probable. The Coronation Reef with its thirty-five miles of proved reef, the Clover Field Boring with its extension of the main reef for at least fifteen miles, and the discoveries to the west of Krugersdorp, will bring the total number of natives needed for the Rand to quite half a million. Men, too, will be required to work in the mines of hematite ore that have been discovered in the Lydenburg district. Moreover, natives in great bodies will be necessary for railway construction, irrigation work, for the farms, and the labour given out by the building contractors. In the Johannesburg district alone 37,000 natives are employed in domestic service, in stores, in the hotels, and in various other capacities.

To furnish the required number a population of 10,000,000 would be necessary, on the impossible assumption that every able-bodied man would be willing to work. Now, according to the tables compiled by Mr. E. G. Ravenstein, the total population of British South and Central Africa amounts to a little over 6,250,000.

For those who hold the foregoing views the remedy is Chinese labour, safeguards being established to insure

the return of the men to their native country at the expiration of their term of service. Such safeguards have been imposed in other colonies; but, however strict the law, it has been evaded, and Natal, for example, swarms with Indian coolies who have settled down as storekeepers, landed proprietors, and so forth.

But in Natal, as in Australia and the United States, the Asiatics were, in the first instance, introduced without due restrictions; and when the restrictions were ultimately imposed the alien population had spread far and had got out of hand, so that it was too late to effect the desired result by any legislation. If the white working men and storekeepers in the Transvaal clearly understood that before a single Chinaman was introduced into the country careful and rigorous regulations would be enacted which would make it practically impossible for the alien to compete with white skilled labour or with the smaller tradesmen, that heavy penalties would be imposed on employers who should break the law, that the Chinese would be employed in the mines alone, and would be confined in compounds so that the leakage would be insignificant, then the chief reasons for the existing strong and natural objection to the experiment would be removed. Of late the white miners have held meetings at which they have advocated the introduction of Chinese for mining purposes.

The protest made by certain members of the Cape Parliament against the employment of Chinese labour on the Rand is regarded as an impertinence in the Transvaal, and is certainly a wholly unwarrantable interference with the internal affairs of another colony. The Boer farmers have no reason to entertain, and so far as I could gather do not entertain, any real

objection to the use of Chinese in the mines. They are suffering from the insufficiency of Kaffir labour on their farms, and they realise that they will benefit if the introduction of Chinese frees the adult Kaffir population from mining work. Ex-General Botha is not the representative voice in the Transvaal, as he was recently stated to be in the once leading organ of the Liberal party in England. He represents but himself and a comparatively small band of irreconcilables, and his utterances should carry as little weight in our country as they do in his own. He and his party are losing their hold on the people and are struggling to regain their influence. The agitation against the introduction of Asiatic labour, of which Botha is the mouthpiece, is a purely manufactured one. Those who quote Botha with approval in England apparently have yet to learn that his aim is to keep South Africa in a state of ferment, to mislead public opinion at home, embarrassing our Government, weakening the resolution of our statesmen, and so to undermine British supremacy in the land for which we have made such great sacrifices. The reconciliation of the two races, the good of his people, is not the end of this foolish, conceited, and ambitious agitator.

Of course, even the advocates of the introduction of yellow labour are reluctant to try the experiment except as a last resort, after every other system of obtaining labour has been given its trial. Opinions vary widely as to how many natives could be recruited in Portuguese East Africa. There are also men of experience in the Transvaal who maintain that 100,000 native miners will suffice for the Rand. They believe that Kaffir labour can be made more efficient, and it is certain that already the rigidly enforced law that prohibits the sale of

alcohol to natives has enabled his employer to get more work out of the Kaffir. There was a time when the native working on the mines was drunk and was incapable of labour for the first two or three days of each week. Rations of Kaffir beer are, very properly, still served out to him on the mines, for this comparatively innocuous beverage is a preventive of scurvy, the scourge of the mines, and the Kaffir, if allowed to use the liquor in moderation, has no craving for stronger drink, and so refrains from spirit-smuggling. Where experts hold such conflicting views, to what conclusions can one come? The truth probably lies somewhere between the two extremes of opinion.

It is certain that the Kaffir is averse from work, and there is a likelihood of a chronic dearth of native labour on the mines unless steps are taken to amend the existing conditions. The Kaffir has of late years advanced in civilisation; his needs are greater; he cultivates the land more than he did; he has become a stock farmer, breeding cattle, not as of old merely that he may be able to purchase wives with them, but for purposes of sale to the white man. He has discovered that he can make more money by farming his land, at the expenditure of very little personal labour, than by toiling in the mines. He consequently is inclined to remain in his kraal and enjoy himself in his own way, and mining is daily becoming more unpopular with the natives. The head men, too, sometimes discountenance the migration to the mines, for the young men when they return have often lost their respect for tribal authority and violate the strict native moral code. In some districts the Kaffirs so enriched themselves during the late war that it will be long before any necessity to work appeals to them. They were overpaid by our

military authorities, and all over the country the natives looted the crops and cattle of the Boers who were away on commando, and in many instances the property of the British also.

All the people one meets about Johannesburg are amazed and dismayed at the outcry that has been raised at home over the labour question by party politicians and sentimentalists. An astounding ignorance is displayed by a section of the Press that speaks of compulsory labour and the ill-treatment of natives. There is much more subservient persuasion than compulsion about it. The agent who visits a location in order to recruit boys has to be on his best behaviour, sometimes almost servile in his politeness, else his mission will prove unsuccessful and he will be directed to depart. Again, a manager who permitted the ill-treatment of boys on his mine would soon find it impossible to obtain any labour at all. The returning boys pass the word round among their people, and for a 'boss' to get a bad name in the kraals is to make him useless to his employers. The fact is that Kaffir labour is more free and independent than is unskilled white labour in many parts of Europe, for there is no pressure of hunger to compel the Kaffir to work. He cannot become the slave of the sweater, as is many a man and woman in the East End of London. He is the freest labourer in the world because he can procure all the necessaries of life without working at all.

South Africa has troubles enough to contend with, and it bitterly angers the colonists to find that Great Britain's party politicians are yet once more—to quote from a Rand paper—'using our affairs as pawns in a game of their own.' In some parts of South Africa the crops have rotted on the ground this year because

native labour was not procurable ; yet the suggestion that heavier taxation should be imposed on what Sir William Harcourt calls the ' poor Kaffir ' so as to induce him to work—induce, not force, be it remembered, for it will be for the gratification of his luxurious requirements and not for the procuring of his necessities of life that he will be pressed to find the wherewithal—has been received with a storm of indignation. The ' poor Kaffir ' is in a far better position than are the bulk of our fellow-countrymen, and he is often a rich man. The white man, wherever he is, must needs work or starve. He is heavily taxed. There is not an acre in all South Africa on which he is free to squat. He must purchase his land with gold. On the other hand, the Kaffirs have their huge reserves, always in the most fertile regions, where they can settle at will and pay no rent, living in sensual idleness ; while the purchased slaves called their wives toil for them in the fields and bear to them daughters whom they sell to other men as wife-slaves and so ever add to their wealth. The Kaffirs, too, are squatting on the unoccupied Crown lands, to which they have absolutely no rights. A white man who attempted to do this would soon be turned off. The Kaffirs are also, as I observed when travelling through the Conquered Territory, occupying the abandoned farms of Boers who have not yet been repatriated. They enjoy far more liberty and license than the white man.

The Kaffirs under our rule have been given all the advantages of civilisation without being subjected to any of its obligations. No people on earth live in such indolent luxury. They owe all to our protection ; their herds and flocks increase ; they enrich themselves and fatten in peace. We have secured them against tribal

wars and massacres, devastating raids and slavery, and we succour them in time of famine. The Mashonas, for example, when I first knew them, dwelt among the rocks of the kopje summits and dared not cultivate the plain, fearful of the perpetual menace of a Matabele raid. Now they boldly sow their grain and graze their cattle in the lowlands, knowing that we have removed all danger from them. Free and prosperous as they never were before, they are now becoming the drones of this fair land, and but a very small percentage of them can be persuaded to work on the mines of Rhodesia.

In return for all that has been given to the Kaffir—his security from robbery and murder, his liberation from slavery, his opportunity to enrich himself confident that he can reap where he has sown—the colonist only demands of him that he should contribute his share of work, indispensable to the advance of the country, even as the white man is everywhere compelled to do, and receive for his labour a fair wage. We have created a strangely artificial state of existence for the Kaffir. We place him in reserves, there to live the barbarian's life without incurring the barbarian's dangers. Under our protection he is an irresponsible, happy, sensual creature.

Some maintain that the natives will come in readily to the mines as soon as it is realised in the kraals that the rate of wages, reduced some time since by the Native Labour Association, has once more been raised to its former level. But if, as the majority believe, a sufficiency of native labour cannot be procured unless pressure in some form or other is employed, it seems only fair that such pressure should be brought to bear on the population—a pressure, let philanthropists bear in mind, which in any circumstances will be far lighter than that which in every civilised country compels the

bulk of the people to toil for their daily bread. Why should the Kaffirs, who are no more the original owners of the country than we are—for it is not so long since their conquering hordes, sweeping down from the north, overran the land and massacred the inhabitants—enjoy privileges that are denied to the white man all the world over? Those who stand in the way of any legislation that is intended to get work out of the Kaffir—whether by taxation, by measures like the Glen-Grey Bill, which by breaking up the tribal system throws the rising generations on their own resources, or otherwise—should bear in mind that their agitation, if successful, renders inevitable the introduction of Chinese labour to the Rand, a system dreaded by the white working men in South Africa, but not unwelcome to some of the mining magnates, signifying as it does labour even cheaper than that of the Kaffir and swelling dividends.

The following are some of the suggested measures by which the Kaffir could be induced to supply his labour more readily than he does at present. The imposition of a heavier hut tax would inflict no real hardship on him. It must be borne in mind that this is a tax on polygamy, being levied on the hut of each wife. Thus, if a man have ten wives he pays a tenfold tax. The raising of the hut tax would probably act as a check on polygamy, and then the Kaffir would himself have to work, instead of sitting down in lazy luxury while his women slaves toil for him. Mr. Bleloch, in his book, 'The New South Africa,' says :

'Sir William Harcourt seems to be of opinion that simply because a native is a native he should not be taxed. This view of the native question only shows a want of knowledge of the facts. The native can as well

afford to pay as Sir William's own income-tax payers at home. Many of the chiefs have hoards of gold in their huts, and all have great wealth in cattle, and to apply even death duties to them would be quite fair but very difficult. As for the tax, it is an insignificant affair. If it were £10 per hut many Kaffirs would not feel it much. A differential hut tax, by which the native who worked on the mines or otherwise for white employers would pay less or even be released from the tax, might produce a good effect. Many, again, recognise the necessity of gradually breaking up the Kaffir locations and their communal system within the colonies if we are to obtain a sufficiency of native labour. The natives in our territory enjoy all the advantages of our just government and complete protection. Have they not their consequent obligations? They should no longer be encouraged to thus dwell apart in communistic communities, irresponsible creatures fattening in idleness on inalienable lands. Legislation on the lines of Mr. Rhodes's Glen-Grey Bill is by many regarded as a solution of the problem. In the meanwhile the existing law by which no more than five Kaffir families may squat on a white man's farms should be rigidly enforced, which is not the case at present; and Kaffirs squatting on unoccupied Crown lands, on Boer farms deserted since the war, and on other lands to which they have no right should be gradually removed, or at any rate be compelled to pay rent. The encouragement of European farming on a large scale, with modern agricultural machinery, by rendering it impossible for the native to compete as a producer, should also have a tendency to drive him into the labour market.'

I may point out that the white artisan has little to fear from the increase of the native labour supply.

The inability of the Kaffir to acquire handicrafts that demand dexterity eliminates the possibility of any serious competition with white labour. On the mines, on the farms, in the industrial centres, the Kaffir will ever remain the unskilled labourer, doing work for which the white man is unsuited.

I have lately conversed with several mining managers and other experts on the subject of the native labour question in so far as it has reference to the mines, and have heard the various remedies discussed by which it is proposed to relieve the shortage of the Kaffir supply. They were practically all in agreement, so I will summarise their opinions. Firstly, as regards the inducements to labour that should be held out to the 'boys.' It is considered that the Chamber of Mines committed a mistake when it reduced the scale of wages at the conclusion of the war, and that even the higher wages that are now paid do not offer sufficient inducements, seeing that the Kaffir is in a more independent position than he ever was before, having enriched himself in the three years of conflict by the looting of cattle, sheep, horses, and grain, and by the high wages he received from the military authorities. In addition to this he has raised exceptionally good crops in the past two years. This season's long drought and poor harvests may to some extent restore the balance.

Among other recommended measures are the following: The 'boys' should be given more wholesome and varied food, the present almost exclusive diet of mealies not being suitable for hard work on the mines. While severe penalties should be inflicted—as they are under the new law—on those who illegally sell drink to natives, it is advisable, for many reasons, that the Kaffir on the mines should receive a small ration of liquor, preferably

in the form of the harmless and wholesome Kaffir beer, which, as I have said, is an excellent anti-scorbutic. The raw 'boy' is not of much value, and efficient labour can be obtained only by encouraging the 'boys' to stay as long as possible on a mine. The rate of wages should increase in proportion to the length of service, so as to make it worth the while of the 'boys' to engage themselves for a long term. In order to get the fullest amount of labour out of the Kaffirs they should be put on piece-work wherever this is possible. It is curious that of the many competitors for native labour the mining industry, the most important of all, offers the smallest inducements. Many 'boys' therefore desert the mines in order to obtain better-paid employment elsewhere—on the Government railways, for example, which pay the natives wages that are possibly too high.

The mining industry is the vital one of the country at present, all the Europeans, directly or indirectly, depending on it for their subsistence. A sufficiency of native labour is more essential to it than to other industries, as in the case of other industries it is feasible to employ white labour. It is therefore maintained that the Government, so as not to deplete the mines, should employ white unskilled labour on its works wherever this is possible. The importation of navvies from home for the construction of the new railways meets with general approval. The important railway extensions will make a great demand on the labour market, and if Kaffirs are exclusively employed for the unskilled work, it will go hard with the mining industry and the industries depending on it.

Much can be said in favour of the employment of British navvies, many of whom would probably remain as settlers in the country to increase the British element.

It is stated that their employment would not greatly add to the cost of railway construction. On the Canadian Pacific Railway, where white labour was employed, the excavation of a cubic yard cost on the average one shilling. It cost practically the same on the South African railways, where Kaffir labour was used, though the native's wage was only a shilling a day. But it must be borne in mind that under the conditions that prevail in South Africa white navvy labour must be somewhat more expensive than black; for here the necessaries of life are far dearer than they are in Canada, and the white navvy will be entitled to receive in pay and rations more value than he would get in that country. Moreover, after he has been but a very short time in South Africa the white man ceases to do what would be considered at home a good day's work. This is not a question of climate but of surroundings. Here, as in every country where an inferior coloured race does the bulk of the unskilled labour, white labour becomes to some extent demoralised, the white man soon coming to consider it beneath his dignity to work save in a leisurely and lordly fashion. Every employer of white labour whom I have met in South Africa testifies to this fact. But as an overseer the white man does excellent work, and cannot be dispensed with.

There is no doubt that the mines, as I have pointed out, cannot afford to engage unskilled white labour exclusively. The experiment has been tried and it has failed. The following are some figures to the point. On one mine it was found that Kaffir stokers performed exactly the same amount of work at a cost of £360 as was executed by white stokers at a cost of £1,800. Kaffir underground machine helpers accomplished a piece of work at the cost of £8 which involved

an outlay of £32 when performed by white men. Again, it was calculated that hand-stopping cost when done by Kaffir labour 3s. a ton, by white labour 8s. a ton, and by rock drills just under 8s., so that for this form of work the Kaffir is far cheaper, not merely than the white man, but than machinery also.

And as for the Kaffirs fattening in their locations, they alone in the land, according to the doctrines of Exeter Hall, are to give nothing in return for all the advantages they are now deriving from our rule. The new railways which will open up Swaziland and Basutoland will enable the Kaffirs of those countries to sell their grain at several shillings more per sack than they can sell it at present. We protect them, enrich them, and they contribute next to nothing. Each European Power outside Great Britain imposes, in order to protect its interests, the severest forced labour, in the form of conscription, on its manhood. Would it really be unjust to bring such pressure on the chiefs as would cause them to encourage, instead of discouraging as they often do, their idle young men to go out into the world for a time and work—not for nothing, as the white conscript practically does, but for good wages? It is not the Kaffirs themselves who would see hardship in this, but the sentimentalists at home, whose policy apparently it is to encourage the Kaffir in idleness, sensuality, and slave-driving. Under the protection of Exeter Hall, the Kaffir, doing no work himself, is to become ever richer at the cost of our blood and treasure that gave him security, and by the toil of his slave wives and the sale of the slave daughters they bear to him, while the colonies starve for lack of labour.

The pampered Kaffirs—multiplying exceedingly, becoming ever wealthier, having learnt many of the lessons

of war from observation of the struggle between British and Boer, allowed in several territories to carry arms amid a disarmed white population, ever waxing more insolent because understanding no law but force under their tribal system, attributing our foolish treatment of them to fear of them—are ever becoming a greater danger. After a hideous massacre of the white farming population and a great Kaffir war, ignorant philanthropists may begin to understand that the native is but a savage child, and a murderously unruly one if you let him have his way and spoil him; that the shibboleths of our doctrinaires have no meaning for him; that according to the tribal system he used to be put to compulsory work and did not call it slavery; that to apply to him the same methods and principles as you do to the European, with his entirely different nature and mental outlook, is sheer folly. From every part of South Africa come reports of native unrest. Unarmed Dutch farmers have been murdered by armed natives in the Polela and other districts. Where he has been the most pampered the Kaffir is displaying the most dangerous spirit and contemptuous hostility to Europeans. A Johannesburg newspaper, alluding to the native disaffection in Natal, attributed it to the ‘unpractical policy pursued by the Government.’ ‘It is,’ it said, ‘notorious that the natives of Natal are the most comfortable, the least taxed, and therefore the laziest and most impudent of all the Kaffir populations of South Africa. Some day, unless the policy be changed and the native is made to think less of himself and more of his duty to the State, we shall see serious trouble in Natal.’

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BLOEMFONTEIN CONFERENCE—COST OF LIVING IN SOUTH AFRICA — RAILWAY RATES AND TRANSIT DUES—FISCAL SYSTEM—SCOPE OF THE CONFERENCE—CONFLICTING COLONIAL INTERESTS—THE NEW CUSTOMS UNION CONVENTION REDUCTION OF DUTIES ON FOOD—PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT OF GREAT BRITAIN—THE CONFERENCE AND CHINESE LABOUR.

To turn from the question of cheap native labour to the equally important one of dear white labour. The development of South Africa has up to now, as all agree, been kept back by the excessive cost of living, necessarily bringing with it the proportionately great cost of white labour. As things are now, an artisan with a wife and children cannot on the Rand, if he maintains his family decently, make both ends meet on much less than £1 a day. The average wage of a white miner is a little over £26 a month, and even if he be a single man and a model of prudence he can save little out of that. For this state of things the high railway rates and the fiscal system which was adopted by the South African States are largely responsible.

The Government railways have hitherto been worked as sources of great revenue instead of for the benefit of the community, as should be the case in an undeveloped colony. Heavy transit dues are also exacted by the respective colonies, the Cape charging 3 per cent. on the value of goods travelling through its territory in addition to the extravagant railway rates which it extorts, making it impossible for the South African

farmer to compete with the farmer of Canada, Australia, or the Argentine. It costs less to bring wheat from Canada to Johannesburg than from the grain-growing districts of the Orange River Colony.

The present Administration is now righting this. As Lord Milner, on March 5, explained in his important speech at the meeting of the Railways Extension Commission, the railway systems of the Transvaal and Orange River Colony will henceforth be worked as one. They will be the property of the inhabitants of the two colonies jointly, the management and revenue to be in common. There is to be a considerable reduction in rates ; but the railways are still to be worked as a source of revenue for the present. The Natal Government will no doubt co-operate in the scheme for introducing a cheap uniform scale of railway transport charges throughout the country. The Cape Colony will join in, too, if its rulers are well advised, else she will be left completely out in the cold, and commodities imported into the new colonies, instead of passing over her railways, will come in through Delagoa Bay and Natal. The railway, now in course of construction, which will be carried from Bloemfontein, through Bethlehem, to Harrismith to connect with the Natal line, will make the Orange River Colony independent of the Cape railway system.

It is not merely by their excessively high charges for the carriage of commodities that the railways render living very costly, but also by their delay in the delivery of goods. Merchants complain that transport is conducted in a very slovenly way in South Africa. At the seaports vessels are unloaded in a fashion slow and antiquated ; there is delay and confusion in the Custom Houses ; but worst of all is the tardiness of the goods

trains. There is a complete uncertainty as to the time that an article sent from the coast will take to reach the consignee. This affords a pretext to the up-country traders to maintain their exorbitant prices, for, as they justly point out, under such a system they cannot turn over their money quickly, so they must make a big profit on each sale.

Not only do high railway rates in South Africa cripple industry, but the entire system of taxation, that up till now has been adopted in South Africa, might have been specially designed to retard the progress of the country and keep capital out of it. The Customs duties on provisions, hardware, clothing, furniture, and other necessities are very heavy. Manufacturing enterprise is checked by the taxation of the raw material instead of the finished article. In this democratic country it is the poor man who is taxed and not the rich. There is no income tax. The speculator who makes his hundreds of thousands contributes nothing to the State save the duty on the necessities of life he consumes, a fleabite to him, but a heavy burden to the poor man, who pays exactly the same. Some are of opinion that it would be to the great good of the country to work the railways without profit, and to make up the revenue thus lost by the imposition of an income tax. At present the mining interests alone have been made to bear the burden of the war. The land, finance, and other companies in Johannesburg, earning millions yearly, are untaxed. It is estimated that a tax of one shilling in the pound on all incomes over £1,000 in Johannesburg alone would bring in sufficient to pay the interest on the £30,000,000 war debt. The Transvaal Customs tariff is now being remodelled by the Government. The taxes on necessities are being lightened,

those on luxuries raised, and the whole economic system is being reformed.

At the Customs Conference, which was sitting in Bloemfontein when I was at Johannesburg in the middle of March, the Cape Colony, Natal, the Transvaal, the Orange River Colony, Rhodesia, and Portugal were represented by deputies. The deliberations were on questions that affect the most vital interests of South Africa, but more especially those of the Transvaal. The scope of the Conference was largely widened after its initiation, and not only the Customs tariffs but those important allied questions, the introduction of a common railway rate for the Portuguese and colonial railways, an understanding as to the recruiting of native labour, and even the laying of the foundation of Federation, came under consideration.

The Transvaal is essentially an industrial State. Her agricultural development is behindhand, and she relies solely on the development of her mineral resources for her wealth. A country that is thus dependent on mining industry alone demands above all other things cheapness of living for her working classes, and she will of necessity look to the quarter from which she can the most economically derive her supplies. The financiers and the great financial houses that now practically dominate the Transvaal, as far as her commercial relations are concerned, are determined to make living as cheap as possible. Putting aside all sentimental considerations, they will select as the gateway for trade the seaport that will treat the Transvaal most fairly, even if it be a foreign one. The prosperity of the entire population and the very existence of the country depend on the cheapening of food and other necessities of life which the Transvaal has to import from beyond her frontiers.

Very different are the interests of the British seaboard colonies. They are governed by men who hold opinions widely diverging from those of the industrial magnates of the Transvaal. The Cape Colony long since adopted the system of Protection and imposed excessive duties, in the interest of her Dutch farmers, on all such necessities of life as by any possibility could be produced within her borders. Her fiscal policy was well described as one of dear bread and cheap brandy. Natal for a period was inclined to Free Trade; and under the hybrid form of government which existed before she was entrusted with the control of her own affairs the merchants of Durban, naturally Free Traders, ruled her fiscal policy. The Cape Colony made several futile attempts to induce Natal to accept the principle of high duties and the complete protection of local industries. In 1894 a conference was held in Capetown and a provisional convention was agreed to; but the Natal Parliament refused its sanction to the departure from its former fiscal policy which that convention involved. Again, a year later, at a conference held at Bloemfontein, Sir Michael Gallwey, who acted as chairman, refused on the part of Natal to entertain the idea of prohibitive duties. But at last, under her second responsible Ministry, Natal entered the existing Customs Convention, in which the Cape Colony and the Orange Free State were the other parties. Rhodesia later on entered the convention, but subsequently withdrew, realising that the terms of the arrangement made living too dear for a country which, like the Transvaal, depended on its industries and not on agriculture.

The late war, by bringing the five South African States under one flag, has effected a complete change in the general position. In the Transvaal the narrow

fiscal system of Krugerism has been swept away. The more objectionable duties have already been removed, and the present Transvaal Government, revolutionising the old Boer policy, has for its object the advancement of the industrial prosperity of the country. Such a policy therefore must be directly opposed to that of the seaboard States. The essential point of difference lies in the heavy Customs tariffs and railway rates from which Natal and the Cape Colony derive their revenue. Indeed, had it not been for the competition between the Cape and Natal almost prohibitive rates would still be making the progress of the interior impossible. The Cape Colony once claimed it as her right—in consideration of the railways having been constructed with her capital—to make no reduction on her full Customs duties on goods passing through her territory into the inland States. At last the existing system of *ad valorem* transit duties was adopted.

It is maintained that these duties on the necessities of life fall oppressively on the populations of the interior, and it is much resented that the coast colonies, not satisfied with the imposition of heavy railway rates, should, by this system of what may well be called blackmail, exact a considerable portion of their revenues from their sister States. At the beginning of this year the Transvaal appealed to the Cape Colony and Natal to reduce the transit duties. The Cape Colony was apparently willing to consider the question, but Natal would not do so unless the Transvaal agreed to impose a protective tax on seaborne mealies. The Transvaal Government not only refused to impose such a tax but issued a proclamation by which many of the more prohibitive duties of the States Customs tariff were abolished while others were lowered, preference being given to tea

and sugar imported from Portuguese possessions. As Natal is a large producer of both tea and sugar, this last measure was calculated to induce her to come to some agreement with the Transvaal.

It is thus clear that the Conference was composed of antagonistic elements difficult to reconcile. The Transvaal, the Orange River Colony, and Rhodesia would unite in supporting Lord Milner's Free Trade policy. Portugal, too, which for the first time was represented at a Customs Conference in South Africa, was likely to follow Lord Milner's lead, since the money needed for the development of Delagoa Bay must come from Great Britain. Against this combined force were ranged the delegates from the Cape Colony and Natal. The coast colonies cannot well exist without the revenue they draw from Customs and railways, whereas the interior States are in an equally hopeless condition if debarred from cheap transport, cheap foodstuffs, and other necessities of life. The question was whether or not the interior was strong enough to fight out this fiscal war with the seaboard States. Of course, if the seaboard States would make no concessions, it was open to the Transvaal, the Orange River Colony, and Rhodesia to come to an arrangement with Portugal whereby Delagoa Bay would become the favoured port for the importation of commodities; and to that place the proposed railway through Swaziland would afford an alternative route. It was the possibility of such an arrangement that gives the interior the whip hand over the coast colonies. One hopeful feature of the situation was that the statesmen of Natal have too much common-sense to allow their colony to be left out in the cold, and they would be more ready to come to an agreement than those of the Cape Colony, who are bound to con-

sider mainly the interests and prejudices of the ignorant Dutch farmers.

It is to be hoped that the day may come when all the railways in South Africa will have one common board of control. For this the foundation has already been laid, the Transvaal, Orange River, and Portuguese lines now all working together as one system. In the face of such a combination the Governments of the coast colonies should ultimately come to terms, for they will suffer if they refuse to do so.¹

¹ Since the above was written the Conference, after considerable discussion, arrived at a compromise, and the representatives of the various British Colonies and Territories in South Africa, on behalf of their respective Governments, agreed upon a Draft Customs Union Convention, which was presented to both Houses of Parliament in June last. The provisions of this Convention are to remain in force for two years after the date of its coming into operation, at the expiration of which time any colony can retire from the Union on giving twelve months' notice of its intention. This Convention supersedes the one that was entered into in 1898 between the Cape Colony, the Orange Free State, and Natal. A comparison of the new with the old tariff shows that the duty on foodstuffs has now been largely reduced, in most cases by about a half, the tax on grain, for example, having been reduced from 2*s.* to 1*s.* per 100 lbs., and that of flour from 4*s.* 2*d.* to 2*s.* per 100 lbs. Explosives for blasting purposes, coke, fodder, and light wines, are also liable to lighter duties than formerly. The duty on spirits of over a certain strength has been raised, as has the duty on articles imported for Kaffir consumption such as blankets and beads. In addition to the special rates, *ad valorem* duties have been imposed on a variety of articles.

The United Kingdom is accorded preferential treatment under the Convention. Thus in the case of goods and articles under Classes I. and V. of the new tariff, a rebate of 25 per cent. on the 10 per cent. *ad valorem* duty chargeable is granted if the goods and articles are the growth, produce, or manufacture of the United Kingdom. Among other articles falling under this head are spirits, liqueurs, wines, beer, and cider; firearms, gunpowder, and other explosives suitable for use in firearms; cigars and cigarettes. The same 25 per cent. rebate is allowed on British goods under Class II. of the tariff, such as bicycles, carriages, carts, on which the *ad valorem* duty chargeable is 12½ per cent., and cotton and woollen manufactured articles on which the *ad valorem* duty is 25 per cent. In the case of goods and articles under Class III. liable to an *ad valorem* duty of 2½ per cent., a rebate of the whole of such duty is granted to British products. Among the articles falling under this head are machinery of various

Before I left Johannesburg the news arrived that the Bloemfontein Conference had decided that Asiatic labour is indispensable in the mines, as a sufficient supply of Kaffir labour is not to be procured. The introduction of Chinese labour under certain restrictions and with safeguards to insure repatriation is likely to come, and will, indeed, be essential to the salvation of South Africa's industries, more especially if sentimentalists at home succeed in preventing the higher taxation of natives. There is no doubt that, even if South Africa does contain within her own borders a sufficient native labour supply, it is difficult to attract it to the mines. Of 'boys' for surface work on the mines there is already an abundant supply : it is of the underground 'boys' there is a lack. The Transvaal Kaffir will not work underground if he can possibly help it ; but the East Coast 'boy' has no such prejudice. Of the 140,000 natives who were working on the gold and coal mines before the war, 90,000 came from Portuguese East Africa, and these were practically the only underground workers. It is not so easy as it was formerly to recruit 'boys' in Portuguese territory. They have discovered that the Rand is not the only place on which to make gold, and that they can procure well-paid and lighter labour much nearer home, for the works connected with the development of Delagoa Bay necessitate

descriptions, construction material and equipment for railways, tramways, and telephones, traction engines, wire rope, acids, and cyanide of potassium. Similar rebates are granted to goods and articles grown, produced, or manufactured in any British colony, protectorate, or possession that grants equivalent reciprocal privileges to the colonies and territories belonging to the Union.

With regard to transit dues, it is provided by the Convention that the colony into which goods are introduced from outside the limits of the Union for removal into another part of the Union shall collect the Customs duties payable, and shall pay over to the colony or territory into which the goods are so removed for consumption the duties so collected, subject to a deduction of 5 per cent. of the duty collected.

the employment of unskilled *native labour* on a large scale.

It is to be hoped that the deliberations of the Conference will lead to the cheapening of the cost of living on the Rand. The Transvaal deputies, who appear to be the most masterful and know clearly what they are fighting for, demand Free Trade in the necessities of life, the reduction of railway rates and transit dues, the termination of a system by which the coast colonies bleed the Transvaal, deriving the greater portion of their revenues from the blackmail which their position has so far enabled them to wring from her. But, whatever is done, Johannesburg is likely to remain for a long time the most expensive of the world's cities; for here the already enormously high house rents have risen quite 50 per cent. since the war. It is this that makes the boarding-house charges so oppressively high for the working people. One day I visited a little house outside the city whose rent was £50 a month. One could get as good a house for £50 a year in the suburbs of London.

It was with some regret that I left this busy fascinating city, surrounded by its girdle of many tall smoking chimneys that tell of the never-ceasing crushing of ore and extraction of gold. It is a city bustling and noisy by day, and strangely peaceful by night; for at an hour when London's chief streets are full of life the streets of Johannesburg are empty, and one only encounters the rare policeman on his beat. But even then absolute stillness does not reign, for one hears a mysterious sound—in audible by day for the din of traffic—a melancholy murmuring like the breaking of the sea on a distant beach. It comes from no one direction, but swells up from all around one. It is the sound of the mining machinery that never stops by day or night in the eager quest for gold.

CHAPTER XIX

PRETORIA—DISCONTENTED CITIZENS—PLOTING OF THE EX-GENERALS—
MISLEADERS OF THE PEOPLE—FAVOURÉD TREATMENT OF NATIONAL
SCOUTS—LESSENING INFLUENCE OF THE IRRECONCILABLE LEADERS—THE
GRIEVANCES OF THE BOER FARMERS—KAFFIR WORSHIPERS—COMPEN-
SATION EXPECTATIONS—USE OF DUTCH LANGUAGE IN THE SCHOOLS—
DEMAND FOR AMNESTY TO CAPT. REBELS.

A two hours' railway journey—first across the golden reefs dotted with battery houses and hills of gleaming tailings, and then across a pretty undulating country deliciously green—brought me to Pretoria, a city in strange contrast to the one I had left, a quiet town nestling among magnificent trees and luxuriant gardens, with no smoking factory chimneys nor din of traffic, a sober, peaceful spot indeed after feverish, bustling Johannesburg. But one soon begins to feel that this is an oppressive, and not a grateful calm ; it is like the sullen stillness that precedes the storm. In the place of the cheery, active business men of Johannesburg, you see in these streets sour-looking Dutchmen of the wealthier class slowly strolling, apparently with but little to do, discontented discourse occupying much of their heavy leisure. Many of these men have good reason for discontent, for they belonged to the gang of officials, great and small, who lived like parasites on that corrupt organisation, the late Transvaal Government ; but now they can no longer fill their purses by levying blackmail on industry. These are the really dangerous people in the new colonies. Here, as in the

Orange River Colony, the bulk of the population, the farmers, 'bywoners,' storekeepers, and others, are settling down quietly, and the reconciliation of the races will gradually proceed if the leaders of the people will leave them alone. But there is abundant proof to show that with a few exceptions this is exactly what the leaders will not do. There is an organisation supported by abundant funds whose object it is to keep race feeling alive, to engender hatred of Great Britain by the spreading of malignant lies. When charged with not keeping the pledges they have given to Mr. Chamberlain the leaders are virtuously indignant and strenuously deny. Their denials carry no weight with Afrikanders, but are intended to hoodwink the trusting and generous people at home, who forget that these same men have denied over and over again, even when the proofs against them were driven home. From Kruger downwards they boldly denied in the face of convincing evidence that they received bribes from the dynamite and other concessionaires. 'Am I the slave of my word?' runs the Boer saying.

It is disheartening to have to come to the conclusion that we cannot take the leaders of the Boer people at their word; but, if we do so, painful may be our awakening. It is certain that the Bond is appointing its agents in these colonies with the object of effecting the combined action of the Dutch throughout South Africa, and so ultimately attaining the political supremacy of the race. The Bond now calls itself the South African Party, following its old policy of ignoring the very existence of a British South Africa. A weekly paper published in South Africa points out that this is as if our Little Englanders dubbed themselves the English Party. 'If the Bond,' to quote the paper, 'chose to

term itself the "Little South African Party" no one would have the slightest objection.' It is unwise to shut our eyes to the present 'slimly' manœuvred Anti-British propaganda. In the Cape Colony, Bond organs wish to reopen old sores by pressing the Colonial Government to appoint a commission to inquire into the working of martial law. In nearly every hotel, farm, and store I visited during my tour through the Orange River Colony I found copies of the Anti-British paper which is published at Bloemfontein. British, and Boers, too, if they were 'hands-uppers,' bitterly complained of the mischief it was doing. 'Then why do you subscribe to the paper?' I inquired. They explained that they did not subscribe to it, that it was sent to them, that it was apparently being distributed freely throughout the country. Funds are not wanting to push this cause.

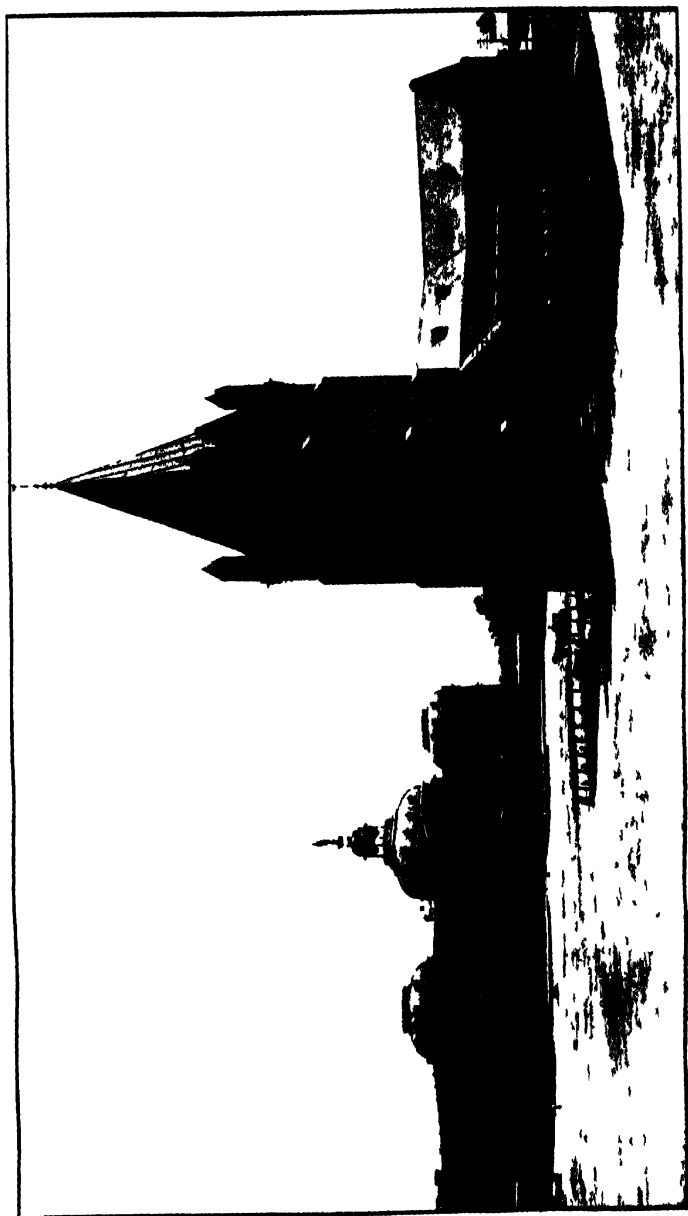
One would have thought that if there was one thing that would have tended to knit the Boers to us it was our kindly treatment of their women and children throughout the war. It is surely descending to very mean methods for Boer politicians—when they feel that the people are slipping away from them and are likely to become reconciled to British rule—to make an organised attempt to embitter the Dutch population by the spreading of calumnies in which all the oft-disproved stories of British barbarity are revived. And yet these are exactly the tactics that ex-Generals Botha and Smuts are now pursuing. It is well that we should be forearmed by being fully forewarned. While I was in Pretoria Smuts and Botha, having a considerable fund at their back, attempted to purchase a Dutch paper published here, and they distinctly stated their object to be the ventilation in the Boer papers of the atrocities

committed by British soldiers and the ill-treatment of Boer women and children in the refuge camps. Delarey, too, was mixed up in this affair, but I think innocently. He may have lent his name to a scheme which he would have repudiated had he known its full bearings. Delarey is one of the few Boer leaders who is trusted by both sides, and it is impossible to believe that the most gallant and chivalrous of our late enemies is playing a double game. Smuts and Botha were baulked by the disclosure of their plans, and the negotiations for the purchase of the paper fell through. Then another Dutch paper, which before the war was owned by a dynamite concessionaire, attempted to absorb the paper in question, offering terms to the proprietors that, from a purely business point of view, were ridiculously generous.

It would be well if this conspiracy could be nipped in the bud, before it works harm among the ignorant farmers who wish to eschew politics and re-establish themselves on their land. There are many other signs to show what is going on below the surface. It is better that people at home should know the whole truth; for if, in ignorance of the facts and over-optimistic with regard to the situation, we fail to trust and support our able administrators on the spot when they act firmly, we are likely to rue it. Fortunately, in Lord Milner, Sir Arthur Lawley, and Sir Hamilton Goold-Adams we have the right men. It is the educated Boer of the towns who is the breeder of all the mischief. He is the real enemy of his own people, retarding the progress of the country and postponing indefinitely the boon of representative government. He wages in politics as useless and wantonly destructive a guerilla war as did De Wet in the field.

A curious place indeed is Pretoria at the present time. Being the headquarters of the educated Boers and Hollanders who supported and lived on the corrupt old *régime*, it is naturally not altogether a loyal or a contented city. British Government officials and Dutch lawyers and doctors fraternise at the club, however, and one sees Boer barristers, who fought against us in the war in the capacity of generals and commandants, now fighting cases in the law courts, wearing the robes of the British Bar, and apparently on the best of terms with their British colleagues. There are few outward signs in Pretoria of the hatred of our yoke and the subtle intrigues against Great Britain of whose existence there is undoubted evidence. As might be expected, the more educated and wealthy people are the most bitter. As far as the Boer farmers and the uneducated people are concerned, they are rapidly reconciling themselves to British rule, and would do so even more quickly if their former leaders in war left them in peace.

These men of the old Oligarchy who used to send their sons to be educated in Cape colleges and British universities, while they kept the people in ignorance so that they might not break away from their influence, are not the true representatives of Boer feeling. Nearly every Dutchman with whom I conversed impressed this point on me. In the Rustenburg district, for example, I met a very intelligent farmer who had come in under Lord Roberts's proclamation and had been persecuted in consequence. 'The ex-generals,' he said, 'tell the world that they speak in the name of the Boer people. They only speak for a minority.' He alluded to the scheme for the amalgamation of Dutch papers under the editorship of a Hollander who used to conduct Mr. Kruger's pet organ before the war, supporting all the



methods of Krugerism, who went to Holland with Kruger—for he fights but with his pen—and who has now returned to South Africa to spread the old propaganda. ‘To us progressive farmers,’ said the man, ‘this plan to control the Press has a deep significance, and it puzzles us and pains us to find that some of the ex-generals and other leaders who were strongly Anti-Krugerite and Progressives before the war, and as such might have become our spokesmen now, have thrown in their lot with their and our former bitter enemies of the Kruger *régime*.’ He was of opinion that an election of members for the Legislative Council at the present time would result in the defeat of the irreconcilables and the choice of moderates, who would eschew race and politics, and would consider alone the true interests of the country and people under the British flag.

The men who, realising the futility of further resistance, came in under the proclamations, and the National Scouts who took up arms to protect their wives and children from men of their own race, now persecuted and boycotted by those who held out to the end, have no love for the ex-generals who, by their suicidal obstinacy, brought about their country’s ruin. Most of these men were Progressives and followers of Joubert before the war. They have ever loathed Krugerism and all its ways, and from no people have I heard more bitter things said of the banished old man than from this section of his countrymen. Among those who are now strongly opposed to the ex-generals are many men who came in under Lord Roberts’s proclamation in good faith, but who afterwards, on the evacuation of their districts by our troops, were compelled by the returning ex-generals under pain of death to join a commando again, thus forfeiting the compensation for their losses

to which they would have been entitled under the proclamation. If one adds to these people the numbers who held out to the end, but now realise the useless folly of it all, one will probably find that those who refuse to accept the ex-generals of the Boers as their leaders form a considerable majority of the people.

Farmer after farmer has said to me that Mr. Chamberlain committed a great mistake in offering seats on the Legislative Council to the ex-generals. These farmers maintain that the ex-generals have no mandate to act as spokesmen for the Boer people, and that they only represent the Doppers and the ever-diminishing extremist minority. At first the other side had few spokesmen, not many men having the moral courage of Piet De Wet and Cronjé the younger. But now the 'hands-uppers,' the National Scouts, and others who are opposed to the policy of the *soi-disant* leaders are waxing bolder and express their opinions openly. They no longer submit to be bullied by the irreconcilables, but 'have it out' with them. There are many signs that they are becoming the stronger party, and they are turning the tables on those who laughed at them and insulted them. This change has occurred since Mr. Chamberlain's visit. His statement to the effect that those who were with us or who came in under the proclamations should be the first to receive compensation has given heart to the people.

I found in the various repatriation camps which I visited in the Transvaal that the National Scouts are now the favoured among the ex-burghers. If, for example, two men, one of whom had served as a National Scout, apply to the Board for cattle, and there are not sufficient cattle in the camp to give to both, the ex-National Scout will be served first, and the other will

have to wait his time. That is as it should be. 'This has shut the mouths of those who once jeered at us,' said one ex-Scout to me in Rustenburg. 'We can now laugh at those who used to ask mockingly what we had gained by serving the British.'

It was the common complaint when I first reached this country four months ago that in the matter of compensation 'the Kaffirs came first; the Dutch who fought to the end next; the 'hands-uppers' next; and the British or Dutch loyalists who had fought for us last in order, if they received any compensation at all. There was some truth in this, and it was indeed a method Gilbertian in its topsy-turvyness of treating friend and foe at the conclusion of a war. But the people were confident that all would now be put right by the Compensation and Claims Commission acting on the lines laid down by Mr. Chamberlain. Such were the opinions which I gathered while trekking through the Rustenburg district, though this has ever been regarded as a hotbed of Krugerism, and throughout the war was the principal storm centre in the Transvaal, where the stubborn resistance, however often crushed, sprang up again as strong as ever. True, there are irreconcilables among the farmers who will not allow an Englishman to enter their houses, but these are few and far between, and I myself met with not one of them. I experienced nothing but hospitality and kindness throughout the countryside.

I found that many of these shrewd but uneducated people with whom I mixed are beginning to regard the situation in a true light. It is curious to observe how keen an interest they are taking in the education question. 'We are,' they say, 'ignorant ourselves, but we are determined that our children shall not be so.'

All spoke highly of the work that is being done by the Education Department. During my trek I occasionally saw a large tent standing by the wayside, and found that it was a temporary school-house, to which the people were eagerly sending their children. No farmer complained to me that the Dutch language was not taught for a sufficient number of hours a week, though this, according to the agitators, forms the chief grievance of the people.

I had a conversation with a man whose farm is about twenty miles to the south of Rustenburg. Being better educated than his neighbours, he exercises some influence over them, and they often come to consult him. His views may be taken as representative of those held by the majority of the farmers in his district. He told me that the people, far from accepting the ex-generals as their leaders, complain that they have been deceived by them. 'The generals urged us to go on fighting, telling us false things about the Boer chances, and promising us full compensation for our losses if we fought to the end. Then they went to Vereeniging, and, coming back suddenly, called us together and advised us to surrender. Then they went away and we saw nothing more of them for a time. Where is the help they promised? It is the British, not they, who are helping us.'

It seems that the ex-generals at the conclusion of the war told the men who had fought to the end to wait patiently, as pay at the rate of 5s. a day would shortly be given to them and their claims would be compensated in full. The men are beginning to realise that there is little chance of this promise being fulfilled. When I asked the farmer to whom I have

referred what were the chief grievances of his neighbours, or rather what were the questions on which they displayed most anxiety, he replied as nearly as I can remember in the following words—and from what I have gathered from other farmers the words furnish a fair statement of public opinion in this part of the Transvaal: ‘The subjects which the people chiefly discuss when they come to see me,’ he said, ‘are the labour question, compensation, education, and amnesty to Cape rebels. The Kaffirs have been spoilt by the war. It is very difficult for us to get enough native labour on our farms. The people are anxious to know what the Government will do in this matter. They have been told that the people in Great Britain are worshippers of the Kaffir, and have decided to ruin the Boer farmers by making it illegal for them to employ Kaffirs on their farms.’ This is how the Exeter Hall movement is represented to the Boers by the agitators, whose aim is to keep alive the Anti-British sentiment. The farmer whose words I have quoted somewhat astonished me by saying that if he was unable to obtain a sufficiency of Kaffir labour for his farm he proposed to organise a farmers’ petition to the Government, requesting permission for the employment of Indian labour—a new departure indeed for the Boers.

With regard to the compensation question, the ex-burghers, he said, still hoped that they would ultimately receive compensation in full for their losses. They were, as a rule, satisfied with the assistance that had been given to them by the Repatriation Board and were grateful for it. With respect to the third question, education, he stated that the large majority of the people were anxious that their children should learn English,

and were satisfied with the present system, which provided for the teaching of the Dutch language for a few hours a week only. Those who called themselves the Boer leaders, when agitating for the use of the Dutch language in the schools, represented, he maintained, not the wishes of the people at large, but of the Dopper minority. Many of the clergymen, he added, were constantly impressing on members of their flock that children who learnt English would cease to honour their parents, would be converted to false religions, or would cast away religion altogether, and that their entire character and even racial distinctions would probably be changed.

‘But with regard to education,’ the farmer went on to explain, ‘there is one question which deeply concerns the people and of which they often speak to me. The poorer people who live a long way from a school cannot afford to send their children to it, and yet they are very anxious that their children should be taught. They would be very grateful to the Government if it could help them in some way, for example by making arrangements to board the children at cheap rates in the townships during the school terms, as was done under the late Government.’ Under the Kruger *régime* a parent received £2 a month from the Government for this purpose, and as a rule he devoted 30s. towards the boarding of the child while it was receiving the so-called education, and pocketed the other ten.

As regards the last question mentioned, the amnesty to rebels, the people appear to feel keenly, and here at any rate the ex-generals are voicing public opinion. There is a tendency in the new colonies to despise those Cape leaders who stirred up the war, promised a general

rising of the Colonials, and then, having worked the mischief, retired out of danger. But the Transvaalers who fought naturally entertain feelings of gratitude towards such of the Cape Colonials as took up arms in their cause, and regard it as a point of honour to do all they can to obtain a free pardon for their late comrades. Theirs is a natural and proper sentiment, but it would be foolish on our part to yield to the demand for a general amnesty. Our absurd leniency to the rebels has already placed a premium on sedition.

CHAPTER XX

A TREK THROUGH THE RUSTENBURG DISTRICT—IN THE HEX POORT VALLEY—
THE FIGHT AT BUFFELL'S POORT—THE BRITISH DISASTER AT NOOITGE-
DACHT—OLIFANT'S NEK—RUSTENBURG—THE TOBACCO DISTRICT—IN
KRUGER'S COUNTRY—A PACIFIED REGION—A TREK TO THE PILANDSBERG
—WITH THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONSTABULARY—ON THE ELANDS RIVER—
DESTRUCTION OF DUTCH FARMS BY KAFFIRS.

I WAS not sorry to leave Pretoria, with its atmosphere of intrigue and duplicity, for the pure air of the open veldt. I set out from Pretoria on March 29 with a light spring waggon and a team of ten mules to trek through the Transvaal even as I had done through the Orange River Colony. As I travelled in zigzag in order to visit certain farms and to see some of the battlefields of the late war, it took me three days to reach Rustenburg, which is under seventy miles from Pretoria by the direct road. I should not have required as many as ten mules had it not been for the prevalence of horse sickness, which made it probable that I should lose some of the animals on the way. As a matter of fact, one of the mules died of red-water on my second day out. The farmers told me that since the war the country had become rotten with animal diseases of all sorts. Some attributed this to the rank vegetable growth that had sprung up on the deserted farms. Human beings were not exempt, for in many districts malaria was more severe than has been the case for many years, and had reappeared in regions that had for a long time been free from it. I had a companion with

me as far as Rustenburg, a Dutch farmer of that district who knew all the farmers on the road, so that with him I visited several homesteads and had conversations that enabled me to form a pretty good idea of the opinions of the people. The bitterness of feeling had much diminished, even against the National Scouts, since Mr. Chamberlain's visit. Here, as in the Orange River Colony, I found that the Boers reposed implicit confidence in his will and capacity to set the affairs of South Africa in good order. The fruits of his tour are to be found everywhere. It would be difficult to exaggerate the good he has wrought.

During our first day's journey we followed the main Rustenburg road as far as the banks of the Crocodile River, where we encamped for the night, sleeping on the open veldt, under the stars, a pleasant change indeed after the stuffiness of the cities and hotel life. I was now traversing a country of very different appearance from that through which I had trekked in the Orange River Colony. I was no longer among treeless mountains and immense stretches of pasture unrelieved by even a bush, save where at rare intervals the zone of poplars encircled some ruined homestead. Here mimosa trees and various bushes were scattered over hill and dale, pleasant to look on after the monotony of the treeless lands.

We drove for several leagues up the broad beautiful Hex Poort Valley between the picturesque ranges of the Magaliesberg Mountains on our right and those of the Witwatersrand on our left. Though it had rained hard while I was in Johannesburg, and round that city the country was looking fairly green, here in the valley only a few showers had fallen, the water flowing off the hardened ground without doing any good. The pro-

longed drought was continuing in the district as it was in most parts of this afflicted land, a great calamity coming as it did after the devastation of the long war, and causing much suffering to the already hardly-tried but brave and patient Boer farmers. Yellow was the grass on hill and valley bottom ; but in pleasant contrast to the parched pasture and drooping crops was the dark rich green of the mimosas that dotted all the country and in places formed league-long groves that hid from the sight the withered herbage beneath.

The road we followed the first day was a wonderfully good one for South Africa, and had evidently been recently put into repair under the supervision of skilled engineers. The work, I ascertained, had been entirely carried out here, as on other roads over which I passed, by gangs of Boers, the Repatriation Board wisely refusing to issue rations to able-bodied men if it can find work for them to do. I found that the men were receiving better pay than was given to those working on the Thabanchu Railway construction in the relief camps of the Orange River Colony. The opening out of the country by the construction of proper roads will be of great service to the farmer by reducing the number of cattle needed to draw a loaded waggon and by enabling traction engines to perform much of the transport work, both matters of importance in view of the scarcity of cattle at the present time and the high rate of mortality, especially among the imported stock, from the various local diseases.

All through this beautiful valley Boers and British had fought repeatedly in the war. We passed Rietfontein—not the Rietfontein of Sir George White's action—where I saw on a breezy down the graves of many fallen British soldiers ; and, hard by, Mosilikatse's Nek,

where a party of our troops was caught in a trap. * As we lay out during the night under our blankets on the bush-grown veldt that borders the Crocodile River, my companion told me something of the fighting in which he had taken part in this district. Having been a Progressive and Anti-Krugerite before the conflict, he realised the ruinous folly of the guerilla war, and surrendered to the British at the earliest opportunity. Being intimately acquainted with the country and with transport work, he was made superintendent of our 41st Army Service Corps Company, and did very good service for us, as I have heard from several officers. He was with our convoy of 130 waggons when it was attacked by Delarey at Buffell's Poort, near here, on December 3, 1900. His account, which seems to me to be quite accurate, differs in some respects from those I have read, so it may be worth giving. According to my companion, the escort that was sent to protect this great and very valuable convoy amounted to only 150 men of the West Yorkshires, fourteen men of the Victoria Mounted Rifles, and two guns of the 75th Battery, and this despite the warning that he himself and others had given of the presence of the enemy in strength in the vicinity. As might be expected, the Boers, 500 strong, suddenly fell on the three-mile-long line of waggons, carried off as many as they could, and burnt the rest. Sixty men of the escort, with whom was my friend, made a stand on the kopje and held it until relief came in the evening. These sixty made a very plucky fight of it, losing fifteen killed and twenty-two wounded, the gunners alone losing nine. My informant, Le Roux, spoke with enthusiasm of Captain Farrell, who was in command of the guns. No officer in any army could, he said, have been more brave. It was his courage

alone that prevented the surrender of the men and the capture of the guns. Standing up amid a hail of bullets, he encouraged his men and would have no surrender. The Boers charged within twenty yards of the guns, on which he fired into them with case and drove them back. Le Roux stated that from under the cover of a rock he gazed with amazement at the valour of Farrell, whom he expected to see drop at any moment.

On the following morning we left the main road to follow a more southerly route by rough tracks, as there were some farms which I desired to visit in that direction. We passed several of the usual destroyed homesteads of red brick and other signs of war's wreckage; but on turning a corner we suddenly came on a pleasanter sight that spoke of the happier times that were now to come. Out of one of the temporary tent schools were running a score of merry children, their lessons over for the day. Several of them had tramped far that day with bare feet to obtain the advantages of education. Whatever his faults, the Boer child is eager to learn, and is not given to playing truant. As far as I have seen, the teachers have been well chosen. The schools will be the chief instruments to effect the reconciliation of the races, and already they have done much good.

This day we passed the scenes of many a fight. First, on our right, we drove under a steep gap in the Magaliesberg range, flanked by blockhouses. This was Commando Nek, where De Wet summoned General Baden-Powell to surrender, and received a chaffing reply. Then we outspanned at midday at Nooitgedacht, the farm on which General Clements had his camp when he was attacked by the combined Boer forces and suffered his disaster. On one side of the road I saw

the little cemetery where several of our killed are buried ; among them the gallant Legge, who commanded the Mounted Infantry, with whom I had campaigned in the Soudan. On a height on the further side of the road was the fair white monument which Clements has erected in memory of his fallen men. The traces of our camp were still to be seen hard by the ruined homestead ; behind towered the steep kopje topped by a precipitous terrace on which our outposts were rushed by the Boers. I need not repeat the story of that disastrous day, in which our losses were 60 killed, 180 wounded, and over 300 prisoners.

At night, which was one of storm and rain, we outspanned in a pretty valley, and on the following morning, after holding an inquest on our dead mule, we drove across country until we came on the coach road connecting Krugersdorp and Rustenburg, and followed it to our destination. We crossed the Magaliesberg range by Olifant's Nek, from which one commands a splendid view over a rolling woodland country. The range itself contains some very pleasing scenery, and in the ravine bottoms are shady dells green with the fresh foliage of ferns, tree ferns, and bushes, all intertwined with monkey vines. A capital site for a sanatorium could be found in these mountains. The railway will in all probability pass near Olifant's Nek, and bring this charming country into easy communication with the coast. There is capital shooting, too, to be found here. Close to the Nek is a beautiful farm belonging to Mr Rex, which I visited. Despite the drought, the stream that falls down the shady kloof behind his homestead had sufficed so far for the irrigation of his principal crops. The Magaliesberg tobacco is reputed to be the best in all South Africa, and Mr. Rex cultivates it

extensively on his farm. Here, too, I saw a thriving orange grove, vineyards, and a small plantation of sugarcane, while guavas, bananas, and the fruit trees of the temperate and tropical zones appeared to be equally flourishing.

Inspanning again, we drove into Rustenburg, passing on our way a large camp of tents near which numbers of sturdy Boers were hard at work with pick and shovel on road construction. They appeared to be quite contented. In Rustenburg, as in Pretoria, I found an excellently organised repatriation camp. Here I saw the ex-burghers coming in daily to obtain from the Board cattle, horses, waggons, farming implements, building material, and so forth. Despite the relief works, rations were still being issued to numbers of the poorer Boers. In the Rustenburg district the heads of 150 families were drawing rations, 21,000 rations having been issued in March. But it had been announced that the issue of rations, except to women and children and men physically unfitted for work, would shortly cease altogether.

Rustenburg is a quiet little township of about six hundred inhabitants, a large proportion of whom are dour 'Doppers.' It suffered but little damage during the war, though it was, throughout, a centre of disturbance, and was occupied and evacuated by British and Boers in turn over and over again. It is situated in the midst of a very fruitful region, as rich as any in the Transvaal, where all the fruits of the temperate and sub-tropical zones thrive. The region produces in abundance the best-flavoured tobacco of the whole colony, the hot climate and the richness of the vegetable mould of which the soil is composed in many of the valleys being peculiarly adapted to the cultivation of that

plant. In some portions of the district the population is denser than in any other agricultural country in the Transvaal, with the possible exception of a few very favoured spots. No other population in South Africa affords a more interesting subject for observation at the present time, seeing that it is made up seemingly of the most incongruous elements from the political point of view. 'The most fanatical 'Dopper' followers of Mr. Kruger and the National Scouts who took up arms against their own countrymen are living here side by side, though not exactly in amity. This is Mr. Kruger's own country, and it is full of his relatives.

While trekking to Rustenburg from Pretoria I drove across the farms of Mr. Kruger's many children and grandchildren. Near Waterkloof the countryside is almost exclusively populated by the descendants of the ex-President, who, I am informed, still maintain that the Boers are the chosen people of the Lord, and point to Scripture prophecies to justify their confident belief that Paul Kruger will yet return to the land to rule it from sea to sea. On the other hand, this district supplied quite 200 men to the National Scouts, while a great number of others gave indirect assistance to the British during the war, and the reason for this is not far to seek. The Moderates had come in under Lord Roberts's proclamation. Then our troops evacuated the district. The fighting Boers, returning here, so persecuted the Moderate men—sjamboking them and in some cases shooting them if they refused to go out again on commando—that, exasperated by this treatment, they joined us in the capacity of National Scouts and intelligence officers, so as to assist in bringing the useless guerilla war to a conclusion as soon as possible, and thus save further suffering to their women and

children. It is indeed curious that in this centre of fanatical hatred—the headquarters of Krugerism and ‘Dopperism,’ the bulk of whose population fought stoutly to the end, a region that in the opinion of many who thought that they knew it best was irreconcilable and would remain unsettled—the pacification has perhaps been more complete than in any other part, and the people display nothing but a desire to settle down to the improvement of their farms and to live in harmony with their British neighbours. The fact is that the Krugerites are not accepted as prophets in their own particular country. The people in the Rustenburg region know too much about the descendants of the ex-President, and tell you that these favoured people did little fighting during the war, but were given comfortable billets. Many of the farmers who fought so stoutly until the conclusion of hostilities were Progressives and Anti-Krugerites before the war. At heart they disapproved from the beginning of the policy that dragged their country to its ruin. They are sick of fighting and refuse to be cajoled into further follies by the agitators who wrongfully pose as the leaders of the Boer people.

From Rustenburg I set out on an interesting trek, not through the richer and more densely populated portions of the district, but through a wild and thinly-inhabited region which was not penetrated by our columns during the war, and the history of which for the last three years, though of great interest from several points of view, has never yet been made known. The strange events that occurred there were overlooked at the time, the attention of all being concentrated on the stubborn conflict between the British and the Boers, Captain Burstall, the officer commanding

the South African Constabulary in the Rustenburg district—a scattered little force of 170 mounted police, protecting a region 200 miles long by 80 broad—was about to make a tour of inspection among his posts to the north, and invited me to join him, which I was very glad to do. We set out on April 4, our party consisting of my friend the captain in command, a surgeon-major of the South African Constabulary, a sergeant and two troopers, and myself. Our transport consisted of my waggon with its team of ten mules, a Constabulary waggon, and two Cape carts, so that we formed quite an imposing-looking little force.

We travelled for about one hundred miles through a wild and lonely country, and during that four days' trek, putting aside the Constabulary at the posts, we encountered only three white men. Of Kaffirs, however, we saw a fair number on the road, and we passed several kraals full of women and children. It seemed to us that we were in a purely black man's country. Of the few Boers whose farms are scattered over this region the majority, for reasons which I shall explain, had so far been afraid to return to their homes. The roofless, gutted homesteads which we passed were, with few exceptions, deserted. No attempt had yet been made to put them in repair, and no crops had been sown. As far as the white population was concerned we were traversing a completely desolated and empty land. We saw a fair amount of game, chiefly antelope and those harsh-croaking but very edible bustards the koorhaan, so that our rifles and shot-guns generally kept the pot supplied with buck or bird.

Our first day's journey was to Zand Drift, on the Elands River, twenty-four miles due north of Rustenburg, where the South African Constabulary has a post

of about a dozen men under the command of a lieutenant. Here we passed the night, encamped near the police huts. During this day's trek we met no white men. We crossed a sandy, bush-grown country, almost waterless, of little value for farming purposes, and we saw only two Boer homesteads, both in ruins and deserted. Of little Kaffir kraals there were several on the slopes of the kopjes, and we outspanned for two hours in the middle of the day near one of these, called Bier Kraal. We walked up to this native village, and found it, as is usual in these parts, well laid out, with huts of red clay and courtyards swept scrupulously clean. Many of the huts were empty, for the long drought, which had brought about the almost complete failure of the mealie crops through the greater portion of the Transvaal, had compelled the young men to go forth and seek work among the white people.

On the road we passed frequent small parties of 'boys' tramping to Johannesburg and other centres. I have explained that the Transvaal Kaffirs strongly object to working underground, though they are willing to do the surface labour on the mines. But of surface 'boys' the mining managers have at present all they require, so that many of these natives who were flocking to the Rand from the kraals would find it impossible to obtain employment on the mines, and would be compelled, having spent their money on the road, to return to their homes and seek work on the white men's farms. The farmers were complaining that they could not procure a sufficiency of black labour. There were signs to show that they would shortly have no difficulty in engaging all the 'boys' they required for the cultivation of their land. From the Rustenburg district alone thousands of 'boys' were tramping to the mines, only

to meet with disappointment. The prolonged drought was causing considerable alarm, for actual famine was threatened in some quarters. Linchwe, the paramount chief of the country to which we were now travelling, shrewdly taking action in anticipation of the days of dearth, compelled a large proportion of his young men to leave his kraals and seek work at once. Were it left to them they would, with the usual native improvidence, postpone the taking of this step until the last moment ; that is, until after they had spent all the money they had made during the war, had exhausted their stores of grain, and had starvation at the door.

We found the Elands River dry, a few far-scattered stagnant pools in its bed affording the only supply of drinking water ; and a very poisonous supply it then was, to judge from the accounts one heard. To drink the water of this and other neighbouring rivers unboiled, or even to bathe in it, was likely to infect one with a peculiarly horrible and almost incurable form of tropical disease, apparently corresponding to the red-water sickness of cattle, of which one of my mules died during my trek from Pretoria. I saw some cases of this disease in the Rustenburg Hospital. The two high steep banks covered with a luxuriant sub-tropical vegetation of trees, bush, reeds, and long grass showed that in time of flood the Elands River is a mighty torrent, deep and broad. The scenery of this wide, flat, sandy river bed, walled in by rank vegetation, was singularly like that I remember having seen in the region through which I rode some years ago on my way from Kassala to Suakin.

Very smart and well ordered was the little police station at Zand Drift, all the buildings of which had been erected by the men themselves. The South

African Constabulary is rapidly becoming a fine corps, and several old public school boys and university men are to be found in its ranks. Many of the men, too, are colonials from beyond the seas, who fought through the war, and decided to stay in the country. Thus, most of the troopers whom I met in the course of this journey were Canadians of Strathcona's Horse and the North-West Mounted Police. The South African Constabulary has been reduced from 10,000 men to its peace footing of 6,000. Disloyal South African papers, whether Dutch or renegade British, are now urging a still further reduction of the force, maintaining that it is expensive, useless, and even harmful, as the dragooning of the people is preventing reconciliation. As usual, these journals are not expressing the wishes of the Boer farmers, who for their security look to the South African Constabulary alone. In the pre-war days the Boers maintained in the Transvaal alone a police force of 2,100 men, concentrating them where the British were most numerous, and practically leaving the armed Dutch farmers to protect themselves. For some time to come at least we shall have to maintain a considerable police force in these colonies, and it is certain that the Boer farmers, despite all that the agitators who misrepresent them may say to the contrary, are very anxious to have the Constabulary among them, and would be dismayed were the force seriously reduced. From the moment of its initiation the South African Constabulary was welcomed by the farmers. In many districts, more especially in the one I was now to visit, the farmers, not without good reason, have become very much afraid of the Kaffirs, who would be only too glad to avenge themselves for years of wrongs on their former oppressors. It is not only against the blacks

that the unarmed rural population needs efficient police protection, but also against the dangerous whites—disbanded ex-irregulars, many of them, I am sorry to say—who were then roaming through the country, levying blackmail on isolated farms, lifting horses and cattle, and, so I heard, holding up travellers on the roads that lead from Mafeking to Johannesburg.

The Boers who wish to settle down also look to the police to put a check on the mischievous work of the agitators and boycotters, and even on that of the clergymen who excommunicate those who rendered any assistance to the British during the war. The National Scouts would have long since been compelled to leave the country had it not been for the protection afforded by the scattered little Constabulary posts. These mounted men thoroughly patrol the country and keep the Government well informed as to any mischief that may be brewing. The Dutch farmer is fond of money, and will not part with his beloved land except on terms favourable to himself; and yet, in every case of which I have knowledge, the farmers are so anxious to have Constabulary posts on their own farms that they have offered the Government plots of land free, with rights of grazing and water, for this purpose. In the Kaffir districts the only Boers who have returned are those whose homesteads are in the immediate vicinity of a police post. The others so far have not ventured to come back to regions which they rightly regard as dangerous to them. During the war, as I shall explain later on, a large tract of country to the north of the Elands River was practically in the hands of the natives, who fell on the unprotected farms while the majority of the men were away on commando, looted the cattle and the crops, felled the fruit trees, burnt the home-

steads, and killed all the Dutch whom they came across. The Boers of the district had guilty consciences, remembered their former barbarous treatment of these tribes, and, anticipating reprisals, had fortunately taken the great majority of women and children off the farms and placed them in refuge laagers for protection. After crossing the Elands River we travelled for two days through a country in which every homestead had been razed to the ground, not by our troops—for the British columns never operated in this region, though they occasionally skirted it—but by the Kaffirs of the Bakgatla tribe, whose work of destruction was far more complete than that effected by our own soldiery. The blacks had cut down the fruit trees, and had carried off the corrugated iron from the roofs, and even the bricks from the walls, to use them as building material in their kraals.

Outside the huts of the Zand Drift Constabulary post I saw great piles of corrugated iron which had been looted by the Kaffirs of the neighbouring Saulspoort location. The police had compelled the chief to give it up, and it was now to be returned to the Dutch farmers who had owned it. The Kaffirs have also been made to pay compensation to the farmers for the trees that have been cut down. These measures are producing an excellent effect ; on the one hand teaching the Kaffirs that they will not be allowed to have it all their own way, and that we shall not tolerate their ever-increasing insolence ; and on the other hand showing the Dutch that we are ready to protect them and to do them justice. Deceived by the mischievous misstatements of the Dutch Press, they feared that British rule meant absolute license for the Kaffir and a state of things which would make it impossible for the Dutch

farmers to remain in their own country. To them the native question is the single vital one, all the others being insignificant when compared with it. The British Negromaniac, to use the term applied to him by a Dutch friend of mine, is the dreaded bogie of the Boer race.

CHAPTER XXI

THE PILANDSBERG—SAULSPOORT—THE BAKGATLA TRIBE—THE CHIEF
LINCHWE—BAKGATLA CONFLICT WITH THE BOERS—BUFFELL'S KLOOF—
RAIDING BABOONS—BOERS AND THE S.A.C.—ROSCHOEK—A GOVERNMENT
SCHOOL—BOER PREFERENCE FOR EDUCATION IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE—
DUTCH PRIVATE SCHOOLS—THE EDUCATION QUESTION—BOTHAS'S MANU-
FACTURED GRIEVANCES—A RAILWAY APPRENTICESHIP CAMP.

WE encamped for the night in the pure air of the open veldt, the sighing of the wind over the grass and the occasional howling of a hyena or jackal in the distance alone breaking the silence of the lonely land. On the following morning we set out betimes, our intention being to outspan for our midday meal in the Kaffir location of Saulspoort. Throughout our previous day's trek we had seen, looming in front of us, an isolated rugged mountain range that extended for a considerable distance along the northern horizon. Now that we were approaching it, the details of this tumbled mass of kopjes, the exploration of whose hidden recesses was one of the objects of our expedition, became revealed to us. This mountainous region, rising abruptly out of the rolling pastures of the low veldt, is called the Pilandsberg. It has apparently been formed by some great volcanic upheaval, and is in several respects a very interesting and remarkable tract of country. It is a prodigious mass of circular, or rather oval, shape, being about twenty miles in length from east to west and fifteen miles in breadth. This huge natural fortress is encircled by ramparts of lofty, almost inaccessible

mountains, that fall steeply to the low veldt, and, where not too precipitous, are clothed with forest and jungle, the safe retreat of various wild animals, including large dog-faced baboons, which swarm here, and are greatly dreaded by the farmers of the plain, for they descend to the cultivated land in great troops to devour the ripening crops.

Though savage and frowning is the outward mountain rampart, within this spreads a smiling countryside, a beautiful highland country of gently sloping wooded hills and broad green valleys with pleasant shady glens running into them. If one looks down on the Pilandsberg from one of its higher peaks it appears as an intricately crumpled mass of heights and hollows filling the basin formed by the steep mountain zone. In the encircling range are several narrow defiles through which the streams that rise in the highlands within find their way to the low veldt, affording access to the heart of the region.

We skirted the eastern side of the Pilandsberg until we came to one of the narrow openings into the mountain rampart called Saulspoort, and at the mouth of the 'poort' itself found the large native stad of the same name, the headquarters of the section of the Bakgatla tribe that holds territory within the Transvaal border. This location extends along the outside of the Pilandsberg for several miles, forming a scattered village which contains about six thousand of the tribe. One broad street of huts and provision grounds runs through it. Many of the leading men live in well-built houses of red brick. Signs of considerable prosperity and a relatively civilised condition are everywhere apparent. There is a church in the middle of the stad, the mission pastor being a German of the Dutch Reformed Church.

We outspanned outside the really handsome house belonging to Ramono, the chief of the people and the brother of the famous Linchwe. We strolled through the location, and on returning interviewed the Chief and the leading men, who seemed contented with the situation and had no cause for complaint. But the people were troubled, they explained, because of the long drought and the failure of the crops. Two hundred 'boys' had recently set out for the mines.

A survey of the history of the Rustenburg region will enable one to better understand what happened here during the war. This district was the cradle of the Bakgatla race, which became the most powerful native people in this portion of South Africa, after the Matabele, who for a time were dominant here, had been driven further afield. The Transvaal Boers, after their custom in those days, harassed the Bakgatla, lifted their cattle, and seized some of their best land, the ex-President of the late South African Republic annexing some eligible farms in the neighbourhood, which I believe still stand in his name. Many gross injustices were committed, and the murder of natives appears to have been the Boers' pastime. Linchwe's father was then the paramount Chief of the Bakgatla. The Boers seized him, and under some frivolous pretext lashed him to a waggon shaft and brutally sjamboked him. The flogging of the chief was more bitterly resented by the persecuted people than was any other of their various ills. The bulk of them trekked away westward from their native country into what was then a No Man's Land, but which now forms part of the Bechuana-land Protectorate.

Mochudi was then selected as the principal stad of the Bakgatla, and here Linchwe now rules his people

as paramount Chief. Under his shrewd and firm guidance his tribe has prospered greatly, and he is now the most important native chief to the south of Khama's country. I visited Mochudi eleven years ago and there met Linchwe. He is now a fat but an exceedingly clever old man, 'slim' as a Boer; but he was then a man of fine physique, active in mind and body, ambitious, arrogant, and not infrequently giving trouble to the Imperial Government. Every man I met in his country carried a Martini-Henry carbine; and, though the Bakgatla are, I believe, now disarmed in theory, I should be surprised to find that they are not well supplied with rifles and ammunition. Linchwe had absolute power over his people. He used to boast that nothing was ever stolen in his country, and that if anything was lost it was always found again when he gave the word. Of this I had proof myself. I was trekking to Bulawayo at the time with a Dutch transport rider. While we were outspanned at Mochudi I lent him my magazine rifle—a novelty in South Africa in those days—and he and some others wandered a few miles into the bush after game. On their way home, carrying a buck which they had killed, they rested under a tree for a while, when the transport rider laid the rifle on the ground, forgetting to pick it up again. It was not until he was close to the stad that he bethought him of my weapon. He at once returned to the tree, but found that the rifle had disappeared. I informed Linchwe of my loss. 'If one of my men has found it,' he said, 'he will bring it to me. To-morrow you will have it.' It was even as he had said. On the following morning a messenger from Linchwe brought the rifle to me.

As Linchwe's stad is beyond the border and under the Bechuanaland Government, the Government of

the Transvaal Colony does not recognise him as holding authority over the Bakgatla of the Saulspoort location, and carries on all negotiations with Saulspoort through Linchwe's brother Ramono, who lives in Saulspoort—a shrewd man, too, but younger than Linchwe, and something like that chief as he was when I first met him. Though Linchwe thus has to work through his brother when dealing with the Bakgatla in Transvaal territory, there is no doubt that all the people regard him as their lord and would implicitly obey his orders.

At the opening of the war the Bakgatla, like the Zulus and Basutos, were eager to wipe out old scores. They longed that the leash should be let go which held them back from avenging themselves on their old enemies the Boers. But the chiefs, reluctantly obeying us, behaved very correctly and restrained their people as long as the Boers were wise enough to leave them alone. At an early stage of the war there was friction in the district. The Boers sjamboked unmercifully or shot natives whom they suspected of giving information to the British. I have it on good authority that men and women were wantonly shot down when ploughing their lands in the Pilandsberg. There are farmers who dwelt in these valleys who will never venture to return to their farms, for they remember what they have done and know that Kaffirs have long memories. The relatives of people who have been sjamboked to death do not readily forget. Stories are told of rash Boers who did return to the district, only to meet their fate. What happened in this remote region between Boers and Kaffirs, while British and Boers were fighting far away, will never be known fully. Men and women, both white and black, have been discovered lying dead here, far from the scene of any of our battles. But

Linchwe, though puzzled at the strange ways of the British, obeyed the instructions of the Government, and held his wrathful and excited people back. At last an event occurred which made open war inevitable, and the aggressors, on whom must rest the blame for what followed, were undoubtedly the Boers. Boer commandos—not drawn from the district where the farmers knew Linchwe too well to provoke his vengeance, but composed of men from other parts of the Transvaal who were indifferent to the ruin in which their action would probably involve the neighbourhood—got astride of the railway, raided Linchwe's country on both sides of the border, occupied Sekwani, and lifted many thousand head of cattle belonging to the Bakgatla. Failing the protection of British columns, what was left for Linchwe but to defend himself and to make an attempt to drive out the looting Boer bands which were overrunning the lands of his people?

Linchwe chose his time for striking a blow, being well informed as to the movements of the Boer forces, organised his commandos, and turned the tables by making a raid into the Transvaal with the object of recapturing the cattle that had been stolen from him, or of recouping himself from the Dutch farms. Only vague rumours of what was going on reached us in Great Britain. Who realised that Linchwe's men, co-operating with the Bakgatla of Saulspoort, overcame all Boer resistance, fought three battles in which they inflicted heavy losses, captured a Boer laager, conquered that portion of the Transvaal that lies between the borders of Linchwe's country and the Elands River to the north of Rustenburg, and, moreover, practically remained in possession of that territory until the end of the war? Yet this is exactly what occurred. Linchwe's

forces were under the command of his fighting Chief, Segati, who displayed considerable generalship, especially on one occasion when he fell on and captured a Boer convoy of forty waggons, while, with detached parties of his men, he detained two Boer commandos in the neighbourhood and prevented them from coming to the relief. This battle lasted throughout the day, and the losses were heavy on both sides. In the course of this retributive raid Linchwe's men captured several thousand head of cattle, and drove them for safety into the Kalahari. The Boers of the Pilandsberg and the surrounding country were not responsible for the Boer raid, but they now had to suffer for it. Everything they possessed was taken or destroyed. The Dutch population had to fly, and not a Boer, man, woman, or child was left in the land. The Bakgatla not only cleared the country of the Boers, but made all the other native tribes in the country subject to them. As the Bakgatla held this extensive region until the end of the war, they came to the conclusion that it had become theirs by right of conquest. They were persuaded that King Edward would, in gratitude for their services, ratify their possession. They are now bitterly disappointed, however, to learn that this will not be the case, and they are puzzled beyond measure to find that we are restoring the farms to their Boer owners—in their eyes a most unnatural thing for a conqueror to do.

Linchwe and his people, despite their disappointment, have behaved very well since the declaration of peace. At our command they have surrendered land without question, restored the corrugated iron they had looted, paid compensation for the destruction of fruit trees; and up till now Boers who have gone into Linchwe's country and claimed cattle have had these given up to

them on producing reasonable evidence of ownership. It appears that the tenacious Boers are not meeting the natives in like spirit, but are refusing to give up claimed cattle, no matter what proof is adduced by the Kaffir owners. I understand that disputes of this sort will in the future be decided in the law courts. Linchwe maintains that he has lost 4,000 more head of cattle than he recovered by his raid, and is claiming compensation for these and for the lives of his men who were killed by the Boers. Such is the story of the Bakgatla, and it will now be understood why so few Dutch farmers have yet returned to cultivate their lands in the district, and why, when they do venture here, they are anxious to dwell under the shadow of a Constabulary station. Up to December last not a single Boer had dared to come back to the Pilandsberg; but now a few are summoning up courage to do so, relying on the South African Constabulary. The total native population of the Rustenburg district is 60,000 souls, so that the Boers here are vastly outnumbered and have always experienced alarm when there was any excitement in the Kaffir locations. The recent successes of the Bakgatla have given these already sufficiently conceited people very swollen heads. They are waxing insolent and may become dangerous. It is natural that the Boer is not altogether happy when living in their midst with his wife and family. In Saulspoort and throughout the Pilandsberg the Kaffirs seemed to be very friendly, and were certainly civil enough to us, but as I was travelling in the company of the Chief of the Police they naturally would be on their best behaviour.

In the afternoon we inspanned, and, leaving the Kaffir location, drove through the narrow poort, which within opened out into a broad, fair valley with wooded

slopes. A few scattered, ruined, and abandoned Boer homesteads told the tale of the Bakgatla raids. Here we saw some of the dog-nosed baboons scrambling among the rocks, huge creatures of a dark brown colour, the big ones when erect standing, I am told, six feet high. A representation of a baboon is on Ramono's official seal and is the badge of his section of the tribe. The Pilandsberg is not only populated with baboons, but is infested with venomous snakes of various species. In some places they are very numerous, and precautions have to be taken when forming one's camp. The little kraals of the Bakgatla were to be seen on most of the hillsides. We found that most of the Kaffir crops had been destroyed by the drought, the spruits were dry, and there was no water in the dams of the deserted farms.

We encamped for the night at Buffell's Kloof, where there is a small South African Constabulary post, and here we found that the Native Commissioner for the district had also established himself. This is a beautiful spot, at the intersection of several glens. It is in the heart of the Pilandsberg, and here the countryside, with palms, cactus, and bamboo, intermingling with the mimosa bush, has quite a tropical appearance. Within a stone's-throw of the Constabulary camp is a Boer homestead, the only one I had so far seen in the Bakgatla country that was being put into repair. The owner, feeling that he will be safe under the eyes of the police, had come back to resume farming.

We trekked next day right across the Pilandsberg, winding along pleasant valleys, and issued from it by a poort on its south-west side at the mouth of which is the Constabulary post of Palmietfontein, situated in a most picturesque spot, where we spent the rest of the

day engaged in some unsuccessful sport, only securing a few birds for the pot. Two of us in vain attempted to stalk and kill the six-feet-high king of the baboons, who was then leading a troop of his people through the mealie fields in the valley, on plunder bent, to the great consternation of an aged Kaffir and some women and children who were guarding the crops, and of whom the baboons had no fear, disregarding their cries and the stones they threw with the excellent aim of long practice. The old Kaffir implored us to rid the valley of this formidable and destructive monarch of the rocks ; but the king baboon no doubt saw the glint of a rifle barrel, and was far too ' slim ' for us. At Palmietfontein the next morning we met the first Dutchman we ' had seen during three days ' wanderings. He was the owner of the farm on which the police huts stood. He was an exburgher who had fought to the end, but he was one of those who had gladly given the Government a free lease of a plot of land, grazing, and water rights, so that a police post might be established on his land.

On the following day we left the pleasant Pilandsberg behind us and drove for thirty-two miles across the low veldt to Rustenburg, taking a different route to that by which we had come, and outspanning for a few hours in the middle of the day at Boschoek, where the South African Constabulary maintains a little post of five troopers. Here we met the Boer who owns the land, and is the producer of some of the best tobacco grown in the Transvaal. He was a member of the Volksraad, and with his sons fought against us until the proclamation of peace. There is no danger of Kaffir raids where his farm is situated, some miles to the south of the Elands River, and yet he, too, has

gladly given the Government land on which to place a Constabulary post.

There is a Government school on this farm, and the master in charge, a German who conducted the school under the old *régime*, told me that he already had forty-eight pupils, which is extremely satisfactory seeing that this is a very thinly-populated part of the country and that the children have to travel many miles daily to the place of instruction. Throughout the country the farmers are anxious that their children should enjoy the great educational advantages afforded by the British Government schools. In these schools the Dutch language is taught for one hour a day only—that is, there is half an hour's Scripture reading in Dutch and half an hour's instruction in Dutch grammar daily. All the other lessons are given in English. The people wholly approve of this system. They have every intention of carefully preserving their mother-tongue, but they rightly argue that the children will learn that at home. As for the High Dutch which the Hollander faction would force upon the population, it is a tongue more foreign to the Boer than English. He has no use for it and no desire to acquire it. He realises that a knowledge of the English language and a better general education than that which has been given heretofore will help his children to success in life. Political agitators only, whose aim is the spread of Anti-British propaganda, are calling for the general use of the Dutch language in the public schools. This agitation is a manufactured one. It has been proved that the vast majority of Boer parents far prefer the Government schools to the private schools, in which the education is imparted in the Dutch language. On this question, again, Mr. Botha misrepresents the feeling of

the people whose representative voice he pretends to be.

The private schools are supported by a fund supplied by Boer sympathisers in Holland. There is every reason to expect that they will entirely disappear as soon as the Government schools are fully established throughout the country. Wherever a Government and a private school are to be found in the same place, the private establishment soon goes to the wall. At Lindley Poort, for example, the attendance of children at the newly-formed Government school amounted to seventy-seven; while at the old private school it had fallen to twenty-five. In another place in this district forty-five pupils attended the private school, and the number fell to ten as soon as the Government school opened its doors. To give other instances in this district—the headquarters of the ‘Doppers,’ where it might be expected that the opposition to English education would be more determined than elsewhere—in Waterkloof, Kruger’s grandchildren used to attend the private school, but shortly after the opening of the Government school their parents transferred them to the Government establishment, knowing how superior was the education afforded in it. In Rustenburg one of the most stubborn advocates of Dutch schools for Dutch children is sending his own boys and girls to the Government high school. Everywhere one hears the same story. I have seen letters signed by the farmers—‘Doppers’ many of them—of several districts, earnestly petitioning the Government to give them local schools for their children. It may be thought that the thrifty Boer parents prefer our schools simply because in these the education is free, whereas a small payment has to be made in the case of the private enterprises. The

facts are as follows : The master of the private school receives £10 a month from the fund provided in Holland, and the parents of his pupils have to subscribe among them £5 more per month to add to his salary. If the people were really desirous of Dutch education for their children there would be an average attendance of quite one hundred at each of the private schools ; so that the contribution of a parent would be a shilling a month for each child, a nominal charge that would not affect the poorest. As a matter of fact, it is the ignorant poor, in the hands of ' Dopper ' fanatics, who do not grudge the payment of the schoolmaster's fee and send their children to the private schools ; whereas it is the better-off and more enlightened who send their children to the free English schools.

I have already spoken of the pecuniary assistance given by the Government under the old *régime* to the parents of poor children living at a distance from a school. The parent was allowed £2 a month for each child to cover the expenses of educating, boarding, and clothing him while he was away from home during the school terms. It was the well-known custom for the parent to pay someone living in the vicinity of the school 30s. a month out of the £2, for taking charge of the child, and to pocket the remaining 10s. himself. Whatever arrangement is made for boarding poor children coming from a distance, no money should pass through the hands of the parents. At present the Government schools are of three classes—the high schools in the towns at which fees are charged, the elementary free schools in the towns, and the free farm schools, like the one I visited at Boschoek. At that time twenty-four Government schools had already been opened in the Rustenburg quarter, and the total attend-

ance, which was increasing by leaps and bounds, was 800 according to the last report. Twenty-eight more schools were shortly to be opened. The organisers of the educational system in the new colonies tell one that it is of course so far only in a tentative stage; but the results up till now have been satisfactory and encouraging beyond the expectations of the most sanguine. There are fanatics among the Dutch clergy who do all they can to thwart us, but, on the other hand, there are many clergymen, even 'Doppers,' who advise the members of their flock to avail themselves of the educational advantages provided by the Government. When the educational question was first broached pessimists pictured to themselves empty Government schools, with masters and mistresses waiting for pupils who never came, while the Dutch children trooped by the open doors on their way to the private seminaries. The reverse of this picture would be nearer to the truth.

While I am on the subject of education I may mention that a scheme has been initiated which finds great favour with the Boers. The Central South African Railway system has its Crewe in Pretoria, and here the various workshops have been established. In connection with the works there is a Dutch lads' apprenticeship camp. The apprentices, who, of course, are under proper supervision, live in the camp, which is close to the workshops. The term of apprenticeship is four years, the apprentice earning fourpence an hour during his first year of probation, fivepence in the second, sixpence in the third, and sevenpence in the fourth. Two shillings a day is deducted from each boy's wages to meet the cost of his food, &c., while he is in camp. In the evening the boys attend a school in the camp.

The Governments of the new colonies are subjected to a good deal of criticism, much of which is carping and grossly unfair. Mistakes have, of course, been made, but is it fully realised at home how much good work has already been done by our overworked South African administrators ? Ever honestly and earnestly devising measures that shall promote the welfare of the community, the reconciliation of the two races, working quietly, tentatively, and perseveringly in divers directions, they have the satisfaction of knowing that their efforts are everywhere bearing good fruit. The Dutch farmers now fully appreciate what is being done for them by the Government, realise the honest motives of those who rule them, and everywhere one hears from Boer lips words of goodwill and expressions of gratitude.

CHAPTER XXII

A TREK THROUGH THE 'DOPPER' COUNTRY—RELIEF WORKS—KEKEWICH'S FIGHT AT MOEDWILL—BOER APPRECIATION OF LORD METHUEN—IN THE BUSH VELDT—KRUGER'S GRANDCHILDREN AT THE ENGLISH SCHOOL—STRENBOKFONTEIN—OLD-WORLD BOERS—THE CONCILIATORY GRAMA-PHONE—THE BRAKFONTEIN FIGHT—THE AUSTRALIANS' GALLANT DEFENCE—A BOER JOB.

ON my return from Rustenburg after my tour through the Pilandsberg I set out for Mafeking, not taking the direct route, but zigzagging among the byways, and visiting districts that lie far back from the frequented roads. Between Pretoria and Mafeking I trekked in all about four hundred miles—a very interesting journey at this juncture, for I was wandering through the districts of Rustenburg and Marico, the most fruitful in the Transvaal, containing the true old Boer population, men simple, ignorant, and unspoilt—dour 'Doppers,' with grizzled voortrekkers among them, many of whom have never seen a town or travelled on a railway; a population that before the war was the most Anti-British of the whole country. People maintain that no one can form any idea of the Transvaal and its inhabitants until he has visited these regions. Repeatedly I hear expressions of regret that Mr. Chamberlain was not taken through these beautiful rich vales of the granary of the Transvaal, the heart of Boerdom and cradle of 'Dopperdom,' instead of across the treeless, desolate, high veldt that lies between Potchefstroom and Mafeking.

‘The Colonial Secretary will have carried away but a poor opinion of our country,’ say the farmers of the fruitful lowlands.

I set out from Rustenburg on April 11. Fortunately, Captain Burstall and Major Priddle, the principal medical officer of the Western Transvaal Division of the Constabulary, with whom I had travelled to the Pilandsberg, were again starting on a tour of inspection among the scattered police camps, and as we were bound partly in the same direction I was enabled to accompany them for the first three days of my journey, during which we wandered far off the main road, following rough veldt tracks in order to reach the various spots at which the police are stationed. Our waggons and Cape carts rattled down the long tree-shaded street of the little town, a street that was now in much better condition than it had ever been under the old *régime*; for now daily were to be seen here—to one who knew the old Transvaal a strange sight significative of the times—a number of Boers, young and old, working with pick and shovel in the thoroughfare. The Boers are beginning to understand that to labour with one’s hands is not disgraceful nor beneath the dignity of the white man. The Repatriation Board was rightly refusing rations to able-bodied men, for whom there was Government work available. The wage given by the Government to the distressed Boers who are employed as navvies is 10s. a day for a ganger, 6s. for a man, and 3s. for a boy. The men can buy what they need at cheap rates from the Repatriation Board. The bulk of the money earned is devoted by these men to the support of their women-kind and children. Thus I found that in nearly every case a man out of his 6s. a day was spending 1s. 6d. on his own rations and other necessities, while he sent

4s. 6d. worth of meat, flour, &c., bought at repatriation prices, to his family. The navvies work cheerfully and well, and in this and in other respects the Boer, since the war, has upset as to his attitude all the forecasts formed by those who thought that they understood best his certainly puzzling nature.

We accomplished thirty miles in our first day's trek. First, we followed the main Zeerust road, crossing the Magaliesberg range by Magato Nek, the name of which will be familiar to all who have followed the history of the war. It was throughout this region that Lord Methuen did such splendid work. The local Boers who fought against him thoroughly appreciate his worth as a soldier. In farm after farm I have heard the fighting ex-burghers speak with the keenest admiration of his generalship—and they ought to be good judges—while his chivalrous nature has won their affection. When the Boers of the Western Transvaal talk of Methuen it is in the same strain that the British in Africa speak of Delarey. Close to Magato Nek and sixteen miles from Rustenburg is the now historic farm of Moedwill. Here we outspanned for a couple of hours near the Constabulary camp, where about half a dozen troopers of the corps were stationed. We saw the spot where Keke-wich with his little force so splendidly held his own against the fierce attack made by Delarey on September 30, 1901. The British position was a strong one, having the steep Selous Spruit on one side of it and a donga on the other. But the Boers rushed in at dawn, drove in our outposts from the river bed, and lining ridges that commanded the British camp made of it a death-trap. The story of the wounded Keke-wich gallantly leading his men in the splendid charge that drove Delarey's force from its position and hurled

the burghers into full retreat has been fully told in the histories of the war.

In the ranks of the South African Constabulary are many young Boers who fought against us to the end, and who now—another clear sign of the gradual reconciliation—are doing excellent service as mounted police, having as their comrades the British troopers who were so recently their foemen, and with whom in friendly talk they often fight their old battles over again. Captain Burstall had with him on this tour of inspection a young Boer trooper of the Constabulary who had fought against us under Delarey. He had been present at the Moedwill action and told us the whole story of it as seen from the Boer side. He pointed out to us the positions that were held by the enemy and described the method of the plucky onslaught at dawn, in which he had taken part. We saw the little enclosure on the open veldt where are the graves of the three officers and forty-four men of Kekewich's force who lost their lives in that gallant defence. One cannot take a day's march in any direction in this portion of the country without coming across the groups of little crosses that cover the British slain.

Close to the scene of the Moedwill fight there is a countryside store kept by a Boer who, after he had fought against us for some time, realised, like many others, that further resistance was useless and meant the ruin of the people. He therefore surrendered and served in our Intelligence Department, which, in the eyes of the stalwarts who held out to the end, was but a little less iniquitous thing to do than to serve in the National Scouts. He is living amid a purely Boer population, and it says much for the way things are settling down that we found in his establishment half a

dozen farmers making purchases and chatting with him in friendly fashion. Only a few months before his neighbours would have refused to speak to him or shake hands with him. There was no boycotting here. The man told us that he had no difficulty with the people. Only one old irreconcilable 'Dopper' still refused to enter his store, but even he, though he would not go himself, sent his daughter to the store to purchase what he required.

On leaving Moedwill we turned off the main road and drove across country for fourteen miles in a southerly direction. We were now in the bush veldt, and the closely-grown mimosas covered hill and dale. We passed a few little roofless homesteads, where the people were re-establishing themselves as rapidly as they were able. All were courteous and friendly and showed no signs of bitter feeling. A few months ago the men, on their return from Ceylon, brought face to face with their wrecked homes, and expecting nothing from the Repatriation Board, which had not yet properly organised its work of relief, looked with despair at the future, made no attempt to re-establish themselves, and were bitter indeed. Now they have plucked up heart, look hopefully to the future, have settled down to work, and are grateful to a Government which, as they have come to realise, is anxious to help them.

We stopped for a little while at Waterkloof, where there are several homesteads. Here the Government has established one of its farm schools, which is under the direction of an English lady. Close to it is a rival Dutch private school, supported by the fund of which I have spoken. This is a district in which many of Kruger's descendants live. The best farms are in their hands, and Kruger and Eloff are the commonest names

in the neighbourhood. Here Kruger's grandchildren attend the British and not the Dutch school, as also do the children of all the principal farmers. We spoke to one fine old 'Dopper' who had fought to the end. His children, down to his youngest girl of five years, were at the British school. He highly valued the instruction given there, and proudly produced one of his sons to show us how far the lad had already advanced in knowledge of English and other subjects taught. The adults, too, are so anxious to acquire the English language that at their own request a night school has been started for their convenience. How can those who pose as the Boer leaders, and their dupes our doctrinaires at home, reconcile the attitude of the farmers in this, the headquarters of Boer conservatism, with the alleged fervent desire for a purely Dutch education? The agitation is merely a manufactured one. In another place a farmer complained that in the public school of his district the teacher was a German, and he feared that his children would not acquire a good English accent under the tuition of a foreigner.

We were still in the low veldt, but throughout this trek we ever saw ahead of us the dark, well-defined ridge that forms the edge of the healthier, cooler, but less fertile and drier high veldt, 1,000 feet above us, a dreary plateau fit only for grazing purposes. We encamped for the night near the huts of the Steenbokfontein police post, where we found six troopers of the South African Constabulary. The Steenbokfontein Valley, in which Waterkloof is situated, is very rich, producing abundant crops of excellent oranges and tobacco. The owners of the scattered farms which surround the Constabulary post are unspoilt Boers of the old school, who are evidently on the best of terms with

the police, and invite them to their hospitable homesteads. There is no doubt about the popularity of the South African Constabulary in this part of the country. The police camp is on the commonage land, and here as elsewhere the farmers concerned have unanimously agreed to lend the site, with watering and pasturage rights, rent free to the Government. The disloyal papers are crying out for the reduction of the Constabulary force because they realise that all the work of the corps is tending towards the reconciliation which the agitators are anxious to prevent. The men of the South African Constabulary are carefully chosen. Those I met were for the most part home-born British, Canadians, Australians, and Boers. Many of the troopers are gentlemen, and, as far as I can see, the conduct of all is excellent. There is no bullying and dragooning of the Boers. The police protect the farmers and never interfere with them frivolously or harass them after the manner of the gendarmerie of the Continental Powers in conquered territories. Frequently have I seen the farmers come to a police post to seek assistance in some little trouble. They look to the members of the Constabulary as their friends and advisers, and often consult them instead of wasting money on a grasping attorney in a town. Disputants, instead of going to law over some simple matter, will put it before an officer of the Constabulary, and unflinchingly abide by his decision, confident that it is a just one. Knowing as they do all that is going on throughout the countryside, the men of the Constabulary supply the Government with useful intelligence, for no agitator can attempt mischief without its coming to their ears.

Who would expect, out on the wild Transvaal veldt, seventy miles from the nearest railway as the crow

flies, to be listening during one's dinner to the playing of stirring marches by the band of the Grenadier Guards, a volume of harmony from the orchestra of a great opera house, and the singing of the world's most famous *prima donna*? Yet this was our experience as we three dined that night on the open veldt under the stars. For the six troopers of this post had among them purchased a gramophone, which, during our meal, diverted us with a selection from its *répertoire*. The open-mouthed amazement of our Kaffirs when they heard the sounds of music, human voices, and laughter coming apparently out of the ground, was very funny to observe. The men told us that some of the old 'Doppers' when they first heard it were horrified, and went away refusing to listen to the thing, saying that it must be the devil himself. But the fact that it plays a well-known hymn tune has reassured them, and now they come in from all the countryside and ask to hear it. Even a creaking gramophone can be an instrument of race reconciliation.

The next day we drove by rough tracks through the bush veldt, occasionally passing the red walls of roofless homesteads, some abandoned, others in course of repair, and in the afternoon we once more came on the well-maintained main road to Zeerust and reached our appointed camping place, as usual close to a police post. Here a lieutenant and twelve men of the South African Constabulary had their camp on the farm called Brakfontein, a name that will never be forgotten through the Australian States, for this is the scene of the great exploit of the men from 'down under,' rightly considered to have been one of the very finest deeds of arms in the late war. Here, in August, 1900, 455 British colonials for eleven days defended themselves

against 2,500 Boers, who held all the surrounding heights, and from their well-posted guns rained 1,800 shells into the British lines. The British force was composed of men from Queensland, Victoria, and New South Wales, together with 130 Rhodesians. The surrounding country was in the hands of the Boers. Carrington made an attempt to relieve the little force, but was repulsed. The Australians, to all appearances, were hopelessly cut off, and the annihilation of the force seemed the only alternative to surrender. But the men openly expressed their intention not to surrender in any circumstances, even if commanded to do so by their officers. They threw up cunningly-devised shelters and entrenchments, and stubbornly fought on, repelling determined Boer attacks, and compelling the enemy to retire from the most dangerous of the heights he was holding and to place his guns on a ridge further back. They lost nearly all their horses. One of the officers, the gallant Annett, was killed and seventy-five of the men were killed or wounded. At last they were relieved. Conan Doyle in his book gives a good account of this episode. Our colonials, to quote his words, 'were sworn to die before the white flag should wave above them. And so fortune yielded, as fortune will when brave men set their teeth, and Broadwood's troopers, filled with wonder and admiration, rode into the lines of the reduced and emaciated but indomitable garrison.'

I have met men who fought on either side in this fight, and there can be no doubt that it was a magnificent resistance, of which all British people may well be proud. We spent the afternoon in riding over the British and Boer positions, the latter being pointed out to us by the young Dutch South African Constabulary

trooper to whom I have referred, for he had fought against us here as well as at Moedwill. He said it was the hottest fighting in which he had taken part, and according to him the Boer losses must have been heavier than is supposed. We found the valley bottom strewn with the bones of numbers of oxen which had been killed by the enemy's shell. The British position was on a bush-covered rise about half a mile from the Elands River. The defensive works and shelters, which are still standing, testify to the skill and ingenuity of the defenders. Just outside the entrenchments are the graves of the British dead, who were probably buried under cover of the night. There was no water supply within the lines, and all the water needed for men and horses had to be carried up nightly from the river. When, guided by the young Dutch trooper, we rode over the various heights that had been occupied by the enemy, commanding the British lines from all sides, it seemed wonderful indeed to us that our little force could have held its positions for a single day against a determined enemy so far superior in strength.

During this trek we experienced frequent violent thunderstorms. Considering how sparse is the population in South Africa, the loss of life due to lightning is very considerable. While I was at Rustenburg a large store there was set on fire by lightning, and in the Brakfontein police camp they showed us a charred hole in the thatched roof of the mess hut where two days before the lightning had struck, killing on the spot one of the three troopers who were dining inside, rendering insensible and seriously injuring another, and giving a severe shock to the third.

The following morning we left the main road again and struck south by rough tracks until we reached the

high veldt and came on the road along which the Jameson raiders had ridden to their fate. At midday we outspanned for a while near a very pretty gully shaded by mimosas, willows, and tree ferns, where a stream of clear water fell over the rocks in a series of cascades into dark depths beneath. Not far off was the homestead of the man who owned the farm. We called on him, and found him to be a very friendly Boer who had fought stoutly against us until the conclusion of the war. His case affords a good example of the succession of disasters through which many of these farmers have passed with a brave endurance. His homestead had been wrecked in the war and his cattle and horses had been carried off. Returning to his land after the proclamation of peace, he set himself steadily to work to re-establish himself. He rebuilt his homestead, partly restocked his farm, and sowed his seed. But cattle sickness came and destroyed most of the animals he had bought on credit from the Repatriation Board. Then the drought ruined his mealie crops. Still undismayed, he relied on the profits he expected to make from his tobacco-fields and orange-groves to keep things going until better times. But his ill-luck had not done with him yet. A few days before our arrival a violent hailstorm had swept over his farm. The hailstones, as large as walnuts, had broken up all the leaves of his tobacco. In his beautiful orange-grove, too, a large proportion of the still unripe fruit had been knocked off the trees by the same storm. And still the inexorable fates appeared to be pursuing him. On some low-lying patches of his farm the mealies had survived the drought; but had now been devoured by an invasion of porcupines. The patched-up wreck of the homestead and the unfruitful fields on which so much

labour had been thrown away made up a pitiful picture indeed. But the farmer told us of his trials with a smiling face, without putting in a word of complaint. It would no doubt all come out right by-and-by, he said. There is a stubborn fatalistic stoicism in the true Boer which one cannot but respect and admire.

CHAPTER XXIII

IN THE MARICO VALLEY—PROSPERITY OF THE MARICO DISTRICT—THE
LEAD MINES—ZEERUNT—OUR ADMINISTRATORS IN THE TRANSVAAL.—
JOURNEY TO MAPEKING—ON THE HIGH VELD—MAPEKING AFTER THE
WAR—A LOYAL TOWNSHIP—NON-DISTRIBUTION OF MR. HOFMEYER'S PRO-
CLAMATION—CESSATION OF FREE-RAION DISTRIBUTION.

WE encamped for the night near the little police post of Quagga's Hoek, and on the following morning we separated, the two officers and myself setting out in three different directions. After passing through the native location of Mabalstad I crossed the border into the Marico district and followed the Jameson Raid road as far as the place known as the Lead Mines, where there are ancient lead workings. I was now at one of the sources of the Marico River. A stream of clear water here runs down a pretty little valley, green with a lush vegetation. In many other little dells in this neighbourhood the tributary streams pour down into that wonderfully rich Marico Valley, where for many hundreds of square miles there is the best of grazing and a fertile soil adapted to the cultivation of all the products of the temperate and tropical zones. There is an abundance of water, and the conformation of the country lends itself to irrigation on a large scale. The contemplated irrigation scheme should make this the richest district in South Africa from the agricultural point of view. Gold, silver, copper, cinnabar, coal, sulphur, and other minerals are to be found all over Marico, which is likely to attain a great prosperity

when the railway taps it. Whether or not the projected railway will touch Zeerust, the centre of Marico, or be carried to the north of it, is the question which at present is chiefly occupying the minds of the people of that township. All the farmers, too, are anxious that the railway should open up this granary of the Transvaal, and for political as well as other reasons it certainly seems right that the inhabitants of this exceedingly rich region should be afforded their chance.

The farmers of Marico, despite their war losses, the drought, and other disasters, have a very good chance of becoming rich men soon. They are fully aware of this, and are consequently hopeful rather than despondent. Land has gone up greatly in value, and there is a 'boom' in mineral rights. There is scarcely a farmer who cannot get a good price for these rights. In one case £20,000 was offered in my presence. If the gold-fields of Marico prove to be payable, the district will, in one respect, have a considerable advantage over the Witwatersrand. In the Marico district there is a large supply of Kaffir labour. The Transvaal native likes to work in his own district. If near his own home he will even undertake the underground mining, which is distasteful to him, whereas he will refuse to do anything but surface work on the distant mines of the Rand.

Ex-General Snyman, the besieger of Mafeking, has near the lead mines a farm, the sale of which, by the way, he is negotiating for a sum that will make him a wealthy man. I met Snyman and found him exceedingly courteous. There was nothing in his face to denote his savage nature. He eschews politics and is in no sense a leader of his people. He is despised by British and Boer alike. His lethargy during the siege

is put down by the Boers to his unwarlike disposition. They say that he had no wish to take Mafeking, as, had he done so, his services might have been demanded in distant parts of the country. He preferred to remain near his farms. His object was to prolong the siege until the end of the war and so enjoy a comparatively quiet time. If he came to England and delivered lectures he would probably be cheered as a hero by a certain section.

The South African Constabulary has a post at the lead mines in one of the loveliest spots I have seen in South Africa. Here, as in many other parts of the Marico district, one could imagine oneself to be in a Devon valley. The road, where it dipped steeply to the drift, was like a Devon lane. On both sides the branches of the splendid willows and other trees brushed the waggon as we drove down. There was an undergrowth of ferns and blossoming roses. Scattered about the green vale were pretty little red-brick homesteads with flowering creepers twining about the porches. In the Marico valley much of the soil is of the true Devon red. But for the most part the rich vegetation is not that of our own West Country; for here oranges, pomegranates, and bananas form groves around the homesteads, and the fresh green leaves of the tobacco plant spread over broad plantations. The South African Constabulary is composed of handy men, who build their own comfortable huts, and, wherever they have a station, gardening is their favourite occupation when off duty. At the lead mines the troopers showed me some magnificent potatoes they had raised. They had also produced some fine-looking tobacco, specimens of which they were about to send to the coming agricultural show at Zeerust in the hope of winning a prize. This

exhibition is an excellent scheme, and I found that the Boer farmers were taking the keenest interest in it.

I was now but thirty miles from Zeerust. I left the lead mines in the afternoon, drove on till sunset, and then outspanned at a lonely spot on the veldt where a small spruit afforded water for the mules. At four in the morning I inspanned, a vertical, almost full moon enabling us to see our way. We drove across the veldt, at last descended to the beautiful Marico Valley, and by breakfast time arrived at Zeerust.

It is eleven years since I first visited this township. I was on my way to Matabeleland, where we were waging war with Lobengula. Vryburg was then the northern terminus of the railway, and I had to trek for three months in an ox-waggon over 600 miles of practically roadless country to reach the savage kraal where now stands the fair City of Bulawayo.

Zeerust, the population of which is about 600, is still the pretty little willow-shaded town it then was, but the old sleepiness of it has departed for ever. The masons are busy ; there is a perpetual sound of hammering and sawing. Houses are being built rapidly in all directions, new stores are rising, and business is increasing by leaps and bounds. There is the best up-country hotel I had so far seen in the new colonies. The British element seems much stronger than it was. Everywhere are to be seen the signs of prosperity and progress. In Willow Park and other farms in the neighbourhood the Government is now settling young British farmers.

As the centre of this rich district, with its immense agricultural and mineral possibilities, the future of Zeerust is assured. It is a pleasant place too, despite its exceedingly hot climate, and the gaiety of its British society is astonishing the old-fashioned Boers of the

town. On the night of my arrival I attended a well-played representation of a three-act comedy, in which the Resident Magistrate's daughter, the wives of some of the Government officials, the local doctors, and men of the South African Constabulary took part. On the following night the Civil Service gave a ball, at which quite eighty people were present, including, one was glad to see, several Dutch ladies and gentlemen, for these are now beginning to join heartily in our amusements.

I travelled a good deal through the sweet Marico Valley eleven years ago; and on the bush-covered heights above Mr. Taylor's homestead at Willow Park I saw the remains of the old fortifications raised by Mosilikatse. From here one sees spreading below the fair vale, where the red homesteads are scattered among rich pastures, corn fields and fruit orchards. This was the home of the Zulu Chief, Mosilikatse, the father of Lobengula, and the founder of the Matabele nation. None but the best of land satisfied the then dominant Zulus, and here, indeed, they found it. It is now sixty years since the Boers and their native allies—whom they afterwards treated so ungratefully—drove Mosilikatse from this garden of the Transvaal. So, perforce, he and his people trekked north, searching for another rich land. For 500 miles they wandered, until they came to a country that was good enough for them, and, having found it, they established themselves there, murdered or enslaved the inhabitants, and made their chief kraal where now stands the City of Bulawayo. The Boers did much for the favoured land they had conquered, and irrigated farms now fill the vale. Cultivation has almost dispelled the malaria which was formerly more virulent here than in any other part of

the Transvaal. The farmers may expect a very prosperous future under the new *régime* of railway construction, irrigation works, mineral development, the opening of fresh markets, and general enterprise.

When I was last in Zeerust it was a hotbed of Anti-British feeling. Here, close to the Bechuanaland border, the people nourished a hatred against us that they did not conceal. They used to scowl at the British in the streets of Zeerust. All that is now changed: here British and Boers are working together as friends. Observing the results, one begins to think that the seemingly extravagant magnanimity and benevolence of our Government after the war may have been a well-advised policy. It has borne good fruit; it has worked wonders among a section of the fighting Transvaalers who do not misjudge our motives, as do the men in the Cape Colony who never suffered from the war, who talked but never fought, and now attribute our generosity to cowardice. Here, where we were the worst hated, and where the Boer fought us with the greatest stubbornness, there is now a better feeling than perhaps exists anywhere else between the men of the two races.

The simple Boer of the old school likes to be in touch with the representative of Government, to take coffee and shake hands with him, as he now often does with Lord Milner, his two Lieutenant-Governors, and happily also with many of their subordinates. The personal element counts for much here. In Egypt, India, and elsewhere I have seen sympathetic British administrators, single-minded and just, working wonders by winning the respect and affection of the people, whose nature they have been at great pains to understand. It is our public servants who settle and order so masterfully our sword-won lands, using so light, though so

firm, a rein that it is not felt. One realises that the Empire is held together, not by the Home Government with its blunders, its compromises for party purposes, its surrenders of principle at the cost of our oversea fellow-subjects, but by the men on the spot, who serve their country so loyally, who know what is the right course and adopt it, often in the teeth of ignorant opposition from home, and work their country's salvation steadily and silently, often unacknowledged, receiving no reward and seeking none. Thus have I seen men working for us in these colonies. The Boer can understand a true man. Throughout the land harmony will come if we see to it that the right men are appointed as administrators. Here, for example, in the two districts of Rustenburg and Zeerust, which were held to be the most irreconcilable in the Transvaal, we have two excellent Resident Magistrates who are wholly in touch with the people. Their influence has gone far to bring about the present satisfactory condition of things. One realises as one goes through the country that the old British genius for administration is not dead, and one begins to look forward hopefully to South Africa's future.

After a few days' halt I inspanned my mules one morning, and with my driver, a Cape 'boy' who rejoices in the name of Michael Pretorius, set out for Mafeking, which was forty-four miles distant. We drove out of the hot hollow in which Zeerust lies, topped the steep heights which immediately hem in the Marico Valley, then ascended to the high veldt by a succession of great grassy terraces, and rattled along an excellent road over the flat pasture land. We outspanned for the midday halt in a pleasant little grove, an oasis on the treeless veldt, near Ottoshoek, the little town that has grown

up on the Malmani goldfields. As far as I can remember, when I was last here there were but one little hostelry and two or three corrugated iron huts standing on the bare plain ; but now we drove down a long street of comfortable-looking houses, shaded by an avenue of eucalypti which had become fine trees within eleven years of their planting.

From here we followed the road along which Mr. Chamberlain had driven on his way to Mafeking, and outspanned for the night on a bleak, windy spot close to the Cape Colony border, having a rather chilly bivouac under the stars. During that morning's drive into Mafeking, which brought this trek to its conclusion, the horizon ahead of us was formed by the western plains that border the Kalahari Desert, a dark blue belt, like that of a distant ocean, extending between the pale blue of the cloudless sky and the yellow of the parched veldt we were traversing.

Mafeking has grown a good deal since I last saw it nearly eleven years ago. Then it consisted of little more than the central market-square, and even the sides of that were not nearly filled in with houses ; while the streets that had been laid out to run at right angles to the square were for the most part but skeletons of future thoroughfares, with but a few corrugated iron shanties standing here and there. Since then the gaps in the square have been filled up ; several of the streets are lined with handsome buildings ; and rows of trees afford some shade to this sunniest and dustiest of places.

I had expected to find Mafeking in a somewhat depressed condition, for at first sight one would have supposed that recent changes would have undermined its prosperity and almost taken away the very justification for its further existence. It has for several years



MY WAGON ARRIVING AT MAFEKING



THE TROLLEY CARRYING THE MAILES TO THE VICTORIA FALLS

been a thriving business centre, the forwarding station and centre of distribution for a great portion of the Western Transvaal and Bechuanaland. For a time the fact that it was the northern terminus of the Cape Railway system, and that here all goods for the far north had to be taken off the trains and placed on the ox-waggons, gave it an exceptional importance. But now the railway extends to Rhodesia; the large garrison, which recently brought a good deal of money into the town, has been withdrawn; and it appears to be certain that the proposed railway which is to connect the Witwatersrand with the Cape system will not touch Mafeking, but will be carried from Rustenburg in a north-westerly direction to join the Rhodesian Railway at Gaborones. It is also probable that the extensive railway workshops now established in Mafeking, employing a number of hands and bringing a considerable amount of business into the town, will shortly be removed to Bulawayo.

In these circumstances, and seeing that the trade has of late fallen off greatly in Mafeking, it does seem surprising to find that here, as in most other places in South Africa, there is a land 'boom,' the price of town-ship stands having greatly increased since the war. At present the construction of stores and private residences is proceeding rapidly; everywhere the masons are at work, and some of the buildings now rising are substantial and handsome. The Municipality, too, is building a new Town Hall and a Post-Office worthy of the city which this is likely to become in the opinion of some of its inhabitants. There are men here who have confidence in the future of Mafeking. They argue that, situated as it is, it will always remain an important distributing centre; that the Kalahari is being opened

to trade ; that the value, from the farmer's point of view, of much of that undeveloped region has been proved ; that very rich mineral deposits exist in the neighbourhood ; and that the town cannot fail to profit from the advancing prosperity of Bechuanaland, the Marico, and other districts. As Mafeking has been proclaimed a ' free warehousing port ' under the Customs Union Convention, where bonded stores can be purchased duty free under rebate, there is no doubt that a considerable amount of business will always be transacted here.

I drove round the Boer positions and visited our famous fort on Cannon Kopje, where the strong defences that were in vain attacked by the enemy are still standing. Everywhere are visible the signs of the seven months' siege. The English Church which is being erected to the memory of those who died during the defence will be completed before long. Here I was once more in the Cape Colony ; but very different I found this loyal British township, where traitors have not the heart to utter their opinion in public, to the colonial townships I visited at the beginning of my tour, with their unpleasant atmosphere of bitter race hatred, outspoken treason, and malicious boycotting. But the people of Mafeking are not happy under the Cape Government. They know what the supremacy of the ' South African ' Party would mean for them, and they are sick of the Sprigg political system. Smooth words were used by the Bond leaders, but are the promises that were made to Mr. Chamberlain in the name of the Cape Dutch being loyally observed ? At Colesberg and other places the field cornets at that time had not distributed Mr. Hofmeyr's famous circular among the people, and not a farmer knew anything about this instrument of recon-

ciliation, which was to effect so much. If Mr. Hofmeyr's pacific utterances were sincere, how is it that he neglected to attend the great Bond Congress, where he would have had the opportunity of meeting Boer delegates from all parts of the country and urging upon them the conciliatory policy of which he professes to be the apostle? If that circular was honestly meant to influence the Boer population and not merely to hoodwink a credulous British public, how is it that not a single Dutch clergyman alluded to it from the pulpit? It seems that as soon as Mr. Chamberlain had turned his back the disloyalists resumed their tricks. But in loyal Mafeking one hears little of Cape politics, for here practically all men hold the same views.

The local newspaper contained the advertisement of a new, but now wholly unexpected, Transvaal Government notice of considerable importance to the Dutch farmers. As I have pointed out, the system of issuing free rations to ex-burghers, though necessary for a time, proved unsatisfactory both in the Transvaal and in the Orange River Colony. It tended to bring on the pauperism of the people and was open to gross abuses; for many a farmer who drew rations was a rich man worth several thousands of pounds. A large section of the Dutch thought that the silly British Government would support them in idleness for the rest of their lives. That these ex-burghers should be fed free at the expense of the British taxpayers for an indefinite time seemed absurd to the by no means so generously treated British loyalists in the country. It is true that the rations are not free in theory, the recipients being supposed to pay for them in the remote future. But no one imagines that the Government will ever be able to recover what is due to it under this head, and it is certain that the

vast majority of the ex-burghers have not the slightest intention of ever parting with money in payment for these rations. The chairmen of the Repatriation Commissions in every district I visited were anxious for the immediate establishment of relief works so that they could put the able-bodied to work on railway construction, road-making, and so forth, instead of demoralising the men by the distribution of free food. It was full time, too, that the system by which cattle, implements, &c., were being sold to the farmers at cost price, at two years' credit, free of interest, should be discontinued. It will be found that the repatriation of the ex-burghers has cost the British taxpayer far more than was originally intended. The Transvaal Government decided to stop the distribution of free rations and the sales on credit at the end of April. In districts where, owing to the failure of crops or other causes, men who are able to work cannot obtain the necessaries of life, it undertook to begin certain public works, on which employment would be given to those willing to avail themselves of it. Men so employed and their families would be allowed to purchase rations at the repatriation depôts.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE GREAT NORTHERN ROAD—THE BUSH VELDT—THE PIONEERS OF RHODESIA—BULAWAYO—REMINISCENCES OF RHODESIA IN THE EARLY DAYS—RAILWAY COMMUNICATION—RESOURCES OF RHODESIA—REASONS FOR ITS TARDY DEVELOPMENT—A SUCCESSION OF DISASTERS—FUTURE PROSPERITY—PROGRESS UP TILL NOW—CRITICS OF THE CHARTERED COMPANY—NEEDS OF RHODESIA—THE LABOUR QUESTION IN RHODESIA.

A THIRTY-FOUR hours' railway journey brought me from Mafeking to Bulawayo. That long travel northwards through the interminable bush veldt awoke many memories. Ten years ago, before the railway from the Cape had been extended to Mafeking, I occupied three months in trekking with an ox-waggon to Bulawayo in the rainy season, for slow was our progress through the deep sloughs which we frequently encountered. But now in this season of almost unprecedented drought the train crossed dry river-beds where formerly the swollen streams had held us up for days at a time. Now all the long grass was burnt up and yellow, though the country for the most part still presented a verdant appearance, so densely in some places grew the various evergreen trees and shrubs of the bush veldt. For 500 miles the train traversed an almost level country, and I was astonished to find how uninteresting and monotonous it appeared, for when trekking through this wilderness I had found it quite otherwise. It is nearly always thus when a country is surveyed from a railway carriage. All the interest and romance of it seems to have vanished. The man who has looked on a land

only from a train knows nothing of it; even as he knows nothing of the ocean who has gazed on heaving seas and wild skies only from the high deck of the huge liner. The majesty and terror of the ocean can only be realised by one who has navigated it in smaller craft, when one is so much nearer the angry water and when the crests of the waves tower high above one's low decks. So, when trekking through the bush, a man is in close touch with the free wild nature—the plants and flowers and the manifold life of beasts, birds, and reptiles. By day and by night he feels the fascination of the wilderness, and the horror of it, too, if the traveller happens to get lost in it, which can be easily done within a stone's throw of one's waggon where the bush is thick.

Many a romantic story could be told of that long waggon road to the north. Matabeleland was being conquered as I trekked up to it. The rumours of the richness of the new Eldorado had fired the souls of the adventurers of the world. All along that desert track the men of the 'legion that never was listed' were straggling up, the majority on foot. During the outspans men of strange pasts came up to one's waggon to ask for food—never in vain, for in the South African, as in other wilds on the frontiers of the Empire, to succour the white man in need, whatever be his character, is recognised to be as sacred and inviolable a duty as is hospitality with the Arab of the desert. Yet many men died of hunger and thirst and fever on their way to that Promised Land. The day that I came to the little camp of native huts and tattered tents, where now stands the City of Bulawayo, the body of a young Scotsman, which had been found under a tree not three miles off, was brought in. He had travelled all the way from Glasgow,

to die when he had thus all but reached his goal. At that time the Chartered Company found itself compelled to issue a great quantity of free rations to the destitute white men who flocked into the country.

That was in 1893. Great, indeed, have been the changes since then, for now I found myself travelling by train to a spacious civilised city that bears the old name of the savage kraal which we here captured and destroyed—Bulawayo, ‘the place of the killing.’ And this, moreover, was certainly the most comfortable railway journey I have ever experienced in South Africa. To begin with, I had a compartment to myself, for the trains to Rhodesia are not unpleasantly crowded, as is often the case with those that run to Johannesburg. Again, there is no scramble for meals at the station dining-rooms, the stoppages allowing the traveller plenty of time. The food provided, too, is far better than that supplied at the railway stations on the Cape lines, though the caterer is the same. Lastly, when the traveller reaches his destination he finds in the ‘Grand’ an hotel which, I think, deservedly enjoys the reputation of being the best in South Africa.

The train passed a milestone on the line indicating that we were now 1,360 miles from Capetown, and a few minutes later we were at Bulawayo. When I was last here a handful of white men occupied a temporary encampment lying under the shelter of a little fort, for the menace of the Matabele raids was then still with us. But now I was brought to a large railway station, had to pass my baggage through a Custom House, took a cab and drove through broad streets lighted by means of electricity, and lined with avenues of young trees, to a first-class hotel, where turbaned white-robed Indians waited on one in their usual admirable silent fashion,

so that the traveller could have imagined himself to be in one of our luxurious hostelrys in the Far East.

Bulawayo looks like the skeleton of a magnificent city. Round the spacious market-square the streets cut each other at right angles, running from north to south and from east to west. But, save in two or three of the principal streets, the buildings, many of which are strikingly handsome, are so scattered over the vast framework of the city that is to be, that the visitor does not at first realise how large the township really is and how considerable is the number of white people collected here. There are great gaps between the buildings, and the growth of the wild veldt creeps into these from outside, filling the open spaces with bush and grass. Stately public edifices seem to be rising out of the unreclaimed wilderness. If from the centre of the town one looks to the north, west, or south, down the straight streets, they nearly all appear to end abruptly in the parched wastes of the veldt; but eastward the view is bounded by the pleasant suburbs that cover the higher ground beyond the spruit. Here the pretty red-roofed bungalows of the wealthier citizens are scattered among a wild boschage of dark green, many of the structures standing amid delightful gardens, where, by the side of gorgeously blossoming sub-tropical plants, our old-fashioned British flowers—sunflowers, foxgloves, pinks, stocks, pansies, snapdragons, and the rest—thrive wonderfully on the alien soil, blooming more luxuriantly than they do at home.

When the visitor looks down on Bulawayo from the top of a high building he can form an idea of what a handsome city it is likely one day to become. The colouring of the town is remarkably pleasing to the eye, for it is a place of rich and delicate tints of red and

brown harmoniously blending. Ruddy is the soil beneath one's feet, and the buildings, when not of red brick or faced with red cement, are constructed of the sandstone brought from the quarries of the Thabas-Induna, which varies in hue from bright rose to creamy white, with the faintest flush of pink in it—a prevailing redness of tone in striking contrast with the generally blue sky above and the dark green of the surrounding bush.

But one who knew it of old is glad to find that Bulawayo, despite its railway, cabs, hotels, clubs, theatres, electric lighting, Stock Exchange, and churches of many denominations, has not become an entirely civilised place. A considerable proportion of the citizens still abjure the coat of civilisation and go about the town, and even dine in the best hotel, in their shirt-sleeves, the sleeves being turned up to the elbow in the good old up-country style. But in these degenerate days the shirt is often not of flannel, open to the throat, but of fine linen, well laundered and starched, topped with immaculate high collar and smart tie. Ten years ago no one wore a coat, and a starched shirt was tabooed. At a St. Patrick's Day dinner which I attended here a man appeared in a 'boiled shirt.' He never ventured to display it again. But all is changed now, and civilisation advances rapidly into the wilderness. There was not one white woman in Bulawayo when I was here last. But since then many men have settled down with their wives and families; fashionably-dressed ladies are to be seen driving through the streets and shopping at smart millinery and dressmaking establishments, while a multitude of children give the place a cheery aspect. Their sturdy physique, ruddy cheeks, and exuberant vitality should convince any visitor that this is a white man's country.

There is no finer and healthier climate in the world than that of the Rhodesian high veldt. The malaria is confined to the lowlands, and will no doubt disappear with the advance of civilisation. In some of our old-established colonies, occupation and the destruction of the long grass and other rank vegetation, have rendered quite healthy, for men and domestic animals, extensive districts which were once very insalubrious.

But they were grand days before civilisation had come to Bulawayo. Splendid men were those pioneers of Rhodesia who won the country by their prowess, and who have had no lack of fighting ever since in this stormy South Africa. I inquired after old friends. Some have become famous, and some are broken; several are dead, killed in war, or by fever while exploring new wilds. Not a few I have known fell in the late conflict, these including the gallant high-spirited Spreckley. And a heavy shadow still hangs over Bulawayo, because the greatest of the well-known leaders, the big-hearted and far-seeing man who now lies in his grave in the Matoppos Hills, has been taken from his people who loved him. It is always with the deepest reverence and affection that a Rhodesian utters the name of Cecil John Rhodes. Here they knew his worth, had faith in him, and now miss him indeed. They call to mind how, whenever the settlers were in difficulty, or considered that they had any grievance against the Chartered Company, Rhodes would come up and frankly and shrewdly thresh the matter out with them, ready to satisfy their demands, even if it were out of his private fortune, when he found those demands to be just. But when they were not just he brought it home to the agitators that their complaints were groundless or unfair, thus sending the people away contented.

Among the old pioneers of Matabeleland who had been my friends I found a few still here. Thus I was glad to meet once more the well-known James Dawson, the friend of Lobengula, who was established in Bulawayo as a trader years before we conquered the country, and whose hospitable store was the one white man's house when our columns drove the Matabele out of their capital. Well do I remember him at the close of the war setting out with his waggon from Inyati for the Shangani River, as emissary of the Government, to discover the whereabouts of Lobengula and his defeated impis, and, if possible, to negotiate a surrender. No other man could have undertaken the task. I wished to accompany him, but he would not allow me to do so. He explained that it was a risky thing for himself, though he was trusted by Lobengula, to make that journey, and that to have with him any white man unknown to the suspicious Matabele would imperil the success of his mission, and perhaps cost us our lives. Dawson disappeared into the bush for many weeks, and on his return brought us the news of Lobengula's death. He found that the impis were rotting away with small-pox and fever, and were humbled thereby. He persuaded Umjaan and the other chief indunas to come in, and he brought back with him to Inyati the skulls of Wilson's massacred patrol.

At the close of that war the white men who were gathered in Matabeleland represented the pick of the British stock—the younger sons of good families, gentlemen of spirit who had come to retrieve their fallen fortunes, hardy pioneers and hunters, and prospectors who had lived rough lives in every portion of the world ever engaged in the quest of gold. There were, of course, wild people here too, often wholly undesirable, among

them being some of the disbanded Volunteers of one Johannesburg contingent, bent on loot, who 'jumped' everything they came across, and were the most expert of cattle thieves. Measures had to be taken to send them back across the border as soon as was possible. Well do I recollect the first gymkhana meeting that was ever held in the district. It was the Easter Monday of 1894, and all the white men who were scattered over the country pegging out mining claims and farms came in for a spree. A white man who was imprisoned in the fort contrived to get drunk. Unobserved by his warders, he approached the Maxim gun, put in a ribbon of cartridges, and proceeded to open fire on the crowd. His aim was fortunately high, for the bullets whizzed just over our heads. His amusement was stopped by a man who knocked him down, and so released his finger from the Maxim button.

But Bulawayo is quite a respectable place now, and has sobered down after its somewhat riotous youth. The railway is a great steadier of a wild new city. In those days Bulawayo was 600 miles from the Cape Railway, and as far from Beira by the then only practicable road. When I returned to civilisation by way of the East Coast I had to ride across the roadless high veldt from Bulawayo to Salisbury, and thence (after a journey to Victoria and the ruins of Zimbabwe) to Umtali. From Umtali I had to walk through the tsetse fly belt, where horse and oxen cannot live, to the then terminus of the Beira Railway, which was only sixty miles or so from that port: But now you can travel from Capetown through Bulawayo to Beira by rail without changing your carriage, while the railway that is to be carried from Bulawayo across the Zambesi has been completed to within 120 miles of the Victoria

Falls. I found that this branch had just been opened to Mbanji, and the enterprising Mr. Zeederberg, the pioneer of coach services in Rhodesia, announced that he had arranged excursion trips from Bulawayo to the Falls, having laid on ox-waggon transport between the present terminus of the railway and the Zambesi. The excursion was to only occupy twelve days.

Bulawayo has a prosperous air; its citizens are sanguine of the future, but there is an undoubted depression in trade of all descriptions at the present moment, and Rhodesians are, so to speak, marking time. Rhodesia has been proved to be a valuable gold-mining country, of which the possibilities are enormous. Practically inexhaustible coal deposits have been discovered, and this is far the best cattle-ranching country in all South Africa. On the rich soil every product of the temperate and sub-tropical zones flourishes. Magnificent crops are raised, all fruits thrive, tobacco of excellent quality is produced, coffee and tea are cultivated with success, and vast tracts of country are covered with rubber of high commercial value. Yet the settlers as a body cannot be said to be prospering.

But of the extraordinary value of this vast and beautiful region which Cecil Rhodes secured for Great Britain there can be no possible doubt. The day must come when the region will be recognised as being one of our most precious possessions. In the meantime its resources remain practically undeveloped, and the pioneers have found it anything but the Eldorado of their dreams. This state of things is due to various causes. Some critics allege, but their argument is not convincing, that the policy adopted by the Chartered Company is often an ill-advised one, that its laws with regard to gold-mining and the tenure of land are open

to grave objections, and that it discourages the influx of capital as well as of settlers. It seems to be true that several of the smaller subsidiary companies, having secured valuable farming land and mining claims, are doing little to develop their properties, but are locking them up, playing a waiting game, and so depriving the present settlers of their chance.

But the principal, and perhaps the only real, reason for the tardiness of the development of the country's undoubted resources lies in the unparalleled succession of disasters that have crippled the progress of this State since its foundation. The pioneers of Empire expect to have hard times at first, but surely no new colony was ever so sorely tried as this one. In the spring of 1894 the Matabele War was brought to its close; the Volunteers who had conquered the land scattered over it, pegging out their farms and mining claims; townships sprang up all over the veldt, and stands which I saw sold at the first auction held in Bulawayo for £50 a-piece within a short time rose to twenty times that value; the development of the gold mines gave most encouraging results, the farmers prospered, and all looked as bright as possible for the new country. But this was not to last long.

Fortune turned her face from Rhodesia, and calamity on calamity befell the unhappy land. First, in the spring of 1894, the rinderpest, coming from the north, swept over all Rhodesia and destroyed 97 per cent. of the cattle. It was a country that had teemed with cattle and wholly depended on ox-waggons for all transport purposes. Consequently, this plague put a stop to all mining and agricultural operations. Even now a trek ox costs nearly six times as much as it did before the rinderpest. Transport rates rose from 10s. to £5

per 100 lb. All the necessaries of life went up to famine prices, and many of the sturdy pioneers were ruined and left the country.

Then on the top of the rinderpest came the Matabele rebellion, with its massacre of the whites in outlying districts, desperate fighting, and destruction of property, which crippled all industry for more than a year. Science came to the succour of the settlers, and the rinderpest was stamped out by inoculation. Fresh cattle were imported from abroad, but now another plague, almost as deadly as the rinderpest, broke out and spread like wildfire through the country—the tick fever, a very virulent form of red-water fever, which was imported from Australia, and is still killing off the surviving cattle in wholesale fashion, more especially those that are unacclimatised. For this no remedy has yet been found, but Professor Koch, the discoverer of the treatment of rinderpest by serum inoculation, has been in Bulawayo undertaking a series of experiments which he confidently expects will lead to the finding of a method of stamping out the disease.

Following the rinderpest and the Matabele rebellion came the recent three years' Boer War, which once more called on the manhood of the country to abandon industry and take up arms—and stoutly indeed these hardy Rhodesians fought. The war for a time cut off this inland State from all communication with the coast, and everything once more came to a standstill. And these were not the young country's only troubles. Horse sickness, now happily much mitigated, did immense damage. One sees much of the transport work being done by teams of donkeys, which are not subject to the diseases that here prove so fatal to horses and cattle. Locusts, too, came down on the land in enor-

mous swarms and devoured all the crops. The use of toxine, which was widely distributed among the white farmers and Kaffir chiefs, has apparently put a check on the locust plague, for the invasions are not so formidable as they were.

Considering all the calamities that have tried this young country, it is indeed wonderful that its resources have been developed so far as they have been. The 8,000 white people who are now scattered over the huge territory are of stubborn nature and difficult to discourage. They know that the land of their choice is a very good one, and that a great prosperity, though it may be long delayed, will surely come to the settlers who have faith and await the turn of the tide. Here thousands of square miles of the richest pastoral and agricultural land in the world are now lying waste. All new countries have had their early trials, and it is certain that the diseases that are now so destructive to horses and cattle will gradually disappear. Then Rhodesia will take her place as the greatest cattle-breeding country on this continent, and between her many overflowing streams immense tracts of arable land will be brought under cultivation. Rhodesia can support a very large white population, and, of all our possessions in Africa, is likely to be the one in time that will prove to be the most attractive to the British farmer. As for the extensive gold reefs, extending over 500 miles, they have so far been scarcely scratched. According to a report published not long since, out of the 114,000 claims that had been pegged out, only 737 had stamps running on them, and yet the output already amounted to £1,000,000 a year. The development of the mines is now proceeding apace, but many of the companies are naturally awaiting the cheapening

of transport before bringing up machinery, for if a mine be only fifty miles from a railway the cost of the local waggon transport even for that short distance is almost prohibitive at present.

The Chartered Company has its critics among the settlers, and some are crying out for the abrogation of the charter and the establishment of responsible government. One night I heard one of the candidates for the Legislative Council address the electors in this strain. But the common sense of the bulk of the people is fortunately opposed to so impracticable a scheme. The question is scarcely worth arguing. A very large sum would be needed to buy out the Chartered Company. It is obvious that the small and poor community could not raise the necessary amount. The Imperial Government is not likely to advance the requisite millions for such a purpose, and the investing public would not subscribe to a loan. And even if the Rhodesians did succeed in purchasing their independence at a price which would certainly prove an intolerable burden to them, whence would they get the money needed to carry on the government and development of the country? British capital is sorely needed in Rhodesia; but would capitalists, who have of late displayed little anxiety to invest their money in this country under the secure rule of the Chartered Company, be more inclined to do so when they would be at the mercy of the representatives of this small and not very responsible population?

Wiser people here do not forget that the Chartered Company is their true benefactor, and realise that to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs is a foolish policy. So far the company has administered Rhodesia at a loss to itself. If the charter were withdrawn, a

still heavier taxation than that which exists would have to make good that large annual deficit. The company, with its command of capital, has constructed railways, founded townships, and in every direction carried on the up till now unprofitable development of the country on a huge scale. It has always come to the succour of the settlers in time of need. After stamping out the rinderpest, it took active steps to re-stock Rhodesia ; it allows the importers of stock for breeding purposes to carry the cattle over its railways at much reduced and non-paying rates ; and it advances money to settlers on easy terms to enable them to re-stock their farms. During the war the Administration, realising that the interruption of communication would be disastrous, putting a stop to mining and other industries and so throwing Europeans and natives out of work, came to the assistance of the community by making an arrangement for the importation of necessaries through Beira at a fixed rate of transport that put the Chartered Company £5 out of pocket on every ton that was brought in. It also opened its stores and sold its reserves of supplies at reasonable rates when the merchants were beginning to sell their grain and meal at famine prices. By these measures it saved the Rhodesian community great distress. Most people here realise that they owe a great debt of gratitude to the much-abused Chartered Company.

All that Rhodesia needs in order to justify the faith of those who believe in her vast resources and her splendid future is cheap transport, cheap fuel, the influx of capital, and a sufficiency of native labour. To deal with these in their turn. Cheap transport will shortly be provided by the railway extensions which are to tap the principal mining districts, so that soon

every mine of importance will be within twenty miles of a railway station. There is every reason to believe that the stamping out of red-water fever and the restocking of the country will before long bring the cost of local transport by ox-waggon down to its normal level.

Cheap fuel will be provided by the Wankie and other coalfields, the discovery of which has been the salvation of Rhodesia, for the timber has been cut down in the vicinity of most of the mines, and the price of wood fuel is becoming prohibitive in some districts. More capital is needed for the development of the country. There is a large field for profitable investment, and there are signs that capitalists, who some time back deserted this country for the Rand, are now inclined to return to their old love. For the last few years the glamour of the Rand has withdrawn the attention of investors from Rhodesia. As regards the most burning question of all, a cheap and sufficient supply of native labour—Kaffir labour if possible, Chinese if that fails—people here are confident that a satisfactory solution will be found, provided that the theories of the canting section at home are not forced on the land. Here, as elsewhere in South Africa, all men, whether they be Boers and Bondsmen or the most loyal of British, are determined that their country shall not be ruined by our faddists. Do our recklessly ignorant sentimentalists and our insincere party politicians, who apparently have no hesitation in risking the breaking up of the Empire for the sake of place, realise that the people of South Africa—British and Dutch—to a man will brook no unjust interference on the part of our Government in this matter? If our negro worshippers, as the Boer papers call them, have their way, we may

lose South Africa for ever. 'None can be more loyal to the King and to Great Britain than we are,' said a Rhodesian to me, 'but if you choose Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Mr. Lloyd-George and Co. as your rulers the loyalty of the colonies is likely to be strained to breaking point.'

CHAPTER XXV

JOURNEY TO THE VICTORIA FALLS—A PIONEER OF TRANSPORT—PRESENT RAILHEAD OF THE CAPE TO CAIRO RAILWAY—THROUGH THE LONE WOODLAND—THE BLACK PLAIN—WANKIE—A LION-HAUNTED SPOT—THE WANKIE COAL MINE—THE 'SMOKE' OF THE VICTORIA FALLS—THE BROAD ZAMBESI—NORTH-WESTERN RHODESIA—THE TOWNSHIP OF LIVINGSTONE—A ROYAL PRESENT.

It is not so long ago that to have looked at the Victoria Falls was to be recognised as an explorer. Ten years since, when I first visited Rhodesia, the journey to the world's greatest cataract was long and arduous, and for the closing part of the way somewhat dangerous, for hostile tribes were on the road, water was scarce and provisions were unobtainable, the tsetse fly and the poisonous tulip killed off the traveller's cattle, and malarial fever struck him down. The journey from Bulawayo to the Falls alone often occupied two months. The distance from the then railway terminus at Vryburg to the Falls was nearly a thousand miles. But since that time great changes have taken place. The Cape to Cairo Railway has been pushed on from Vryburg to a point 164 miles beyond Bulawayo, the present railhead being 1,524 miles from Capetown and only about 130 from the Falls. That remaining 130 miles of waggon road is, as far as natives are concerned, as safe as the Strand, the tsetse fly has disappeared, and a weekly coach service has been established. The line up to the present railhead was opened to passengers in May; by the time this is published it will have advanced.

another thirty-five miles to Wankie, and in all probability within a year the Falls will have been reached, and one will be able to travel the entire 1,654 miles from Capetown to the Zambesi by train.

So far, the Victoria Falls have been visited by comparatively few Europeans. Sir Charles Metcalfe, in a recent speech on the railway projects in Rhodesia, stated that since the discovery of the Falls by Livingstone not more than 200 white men had seen the mighty cataract. But now people are beginning to travel up-country so that they may gaze at that most wonderful spectacle. At Bulawayo, on my return from the Falls, I found several tourists, including three ladies, preparing for the journey, and there is little doubt that when the railway is completed many hundreds annually will follow their example. But it is good to have seen the Victoria Falls of the Zambesi before civilisation has changed them. At present they are wholly unspoiled by man. They are encompassed by the wildest Nature, where men are few and wild beasts are almost the sole inhabitants of the vast forest land. He who looks on them now sees them exactly as they were unnumbered ages before Livingstone first set eyes on them. 'The most wonderful sight I have witnessed in Africa,' were the words he wrote when describing his discovery.

The journey by road across the 130 miles of uninhabited forest and jungle that lie between the railhead and the Falls is still undoubtedly a rough one. Mr. Zeederberg, the mail contractor, advertises in the newspapers that the mail coach will carry the tourist to the Falls and back again in twelve days, which allows him two full days at Livingstone for the exploration of the cataract. Mr. Zeederberg is the well-known pioneer of transport in the North. Ever moving on in advance of

the railway and of civilisation, he organises coach and waggon transport into the newly-opened territories even before their complete pacification. Thus, as soon as the pioneers had marched into Mashonaland his coaches were running to the Chartered Company's posts from Johannesburg across hundreds of miles of roadless country. And now from this railhead he has established a transport service to the Falls, and for 300 miles beyond them, to the rich copper mines on the Kafue River. The time will come, no doubt, when his coaches will be running between the respective railheads of the Cape and the Egyptian railway systems. One admires Mr. Zeederberg's splendid enterprise, but one cannot conscientiously recommend his advertised coach journey to the Falls to tourists, unless they be the toughest of old travellers, while it is quite impossible for ladies to undertake it.

So many people are now proposing to visit the Falls that a description of the present method of reaching them may be of some service. In the first place, if one avoids the mail coach one can make the journey with comparative comfort. Thus, a party of travellers can charter ox or mule waggons from Mr. Zeederberg. The waggons can be fitted up so that ladies can travel and sleep in them, or tents can be carried. Supplies must, of course, be taken for the entire journey. As for men undertaking the journey, they can attach themselves to the waggons of the transport riders, or walk to the Falls accompanied by natives to carry their baggage and provisions—the pleasantest way of all. The so-called mail coaches, which happen to be rickety Cape carts, accomplish the journey—which is over the roughest road I have ever seen in South Africa—in something under four days, travelling night and day.

The carts are driven by relays of oxen, and at each of the eleven stages on the road at which the teams are changed the traveller finds merely a small stockade or corral, constructed of the branches of trees, high enough and stout enough to prevent the lions from forcing their way in. Into this enclosure the cattle are driven for protection at night. For the passengers there is no such provision. They must lie in the open amid the filth that surrounds the cattle shelter, and take their chance of being devoured. At each of these lonely stations in the forest one finds a single Kaffir boy in charge of the oxen, invariably armed with a rifle with which to defend himself and the animals under his care from the hungry lions that often prowl in the neighbourhood of so tempting a meal. At most of these stages water is procurable—sometimes bad—and of firewood there is never any lack in this wilderness of forest and dense bush veldt. The cart is often overcrowded with miners on their way to the copper-fields and other travellers, and one has to pack oneself among them, as one can, on the top of the piles of mail bags and baggage. What makes the journey so trying is that one has practically no time to eat or sleep for the four days and nights, as the halt at a stage rarely exceeds half an hour, just time enough to change the oxen and little more. The road is abominably rough, and the black drivers are careless, so that capsize and break-downs are frequent. Throughout the day one is exposed to the fierce rays of the tropical sun, and throughout the night the traveller is chilled by cold and soaking dew. It is not to be wondered at that a large proportion of people who undertake this coach journey develop fever shortly afterwards. Despite the fearful bumping of the cart over the boulders and the cramped position, a tired

man might contrive to get some sleep on the cart; but he dare not do so, for the branches of the trees, often covered with thorns, are ever sweeping over the cart during its progress, threatening to knock a sleeper off or to scratch his eyes out, so that the traveller has to be ever on the watch.

On the morning of May 4 I left Bulawayo by train for the railhead, which I reached after a thirteen hours' journey across a monotonous wilderness of bush. At the railhead—a feverish spot, people say, and haunted by lions—there is a railway-construction camp, which will shortly be moved further on as the line advances. I found the vaunted coach standing amid the dense bush. It was an ordinary Cape cart, battered with use on the roughest of roads, with broken brake and broken hood and otherwise dilapidated. And now on this frail-looking vehicle the Kaffirs began to fasten such a load as none of the passengers had ever before seen placed on a cart. Behind the cart and also in front of it, extending well along the dissel-boom, the mail-bags for the North and a mass of transport of all sorts—boxes, bales, barrels, and what not—were lashed, while the body of the cart was piled high above the seats with a miscellaneous cargo. And now on the dizzy summit of this top-heavy mass the four passengers had to hook on, somehow, themselves, their baggage, and their provisions for four days, while the coloured driver also had to find a place somewhere.

The ten oxen were inspanned, and about midnight we drove off into the pitch blackness of the night—for there was no moon—and with a cart so marvellously overladen we anticipated almost certain disaster. I must explain that things are not always as bad as this. It was my ill luck to make the journey under excep-

tionally uncomfortable conditions. The return journey, with only one fellow-passenger on an open four-wheeled trolley that sometimes carries the mails, was quite luxurious in comparison. But the tourist must be prepared to have rough experiences. My three fellow-passengers were all old pioneers and transport riders, the veterans of many wars, one being a Boer who had been wounded when fighting against us. They were of the toughest frontier breed, and none knew better what rough travel meant, but all agreed that this was the hardest and most fatiguing journey they had ever made, and they needed a rest when we reached Livingstone.

So, hanging on as well as we could, we set out on our weary four days' journey. We tumbled along over boulders and tree stumps under the tree branches throughout the night, changing our oxen at one of the stages. On the following day we drove through a country that was no longer flat, but wrinkled with deep valleys. When crossing the high steep ridges we overlooked vast gloomy landscapes. It was a rolling ocean of dark woodland, the timber and bush covered hill and dale, a very desolate region, for we saw no sign of human life save at the stages where the solitary Kaffir boys guarded the teams of oxen. It was a forlorn primeval wilderness wherein even the wild beasts appeared to be rare; for, with the exception of large baboons, and squirrels, we encountered no animal life on the way, and I have no lion adventure to record.

The difficulties of the road now increased; huge boulders everywhere obstructed our way, and our brakeless cart 'took command' when descending the frequent steep drifts, plunging down on the confused crowd of oxen at the bottom, at the risk of killing some of them. The almost precipitous track, by which a mica-strewn

height known to travellers as Mica Hill is descended, was, so we all agreed, the worst bit of so-called road any of us had ever come across. The cart, now balancing first on one wheel and then on the other, dashed down from one three-feet-high block of rock to another. Here we had our first breakdown and carried away our dissel-boom. The passengers felled a tree of suitable girth, and with a blunt axe that was found in the cart shaped a new boom. As there were neither auger nor spanners—as there should have been—in this ill-appointed cart, the new boom could not be fitted into the irons and had to be lashed on as firmly as possible with ‘reims’—the thongs of raw hide with which, according to the saying, South Africa is held together—and then with this wobbling jury shaft, that prevented the cart from steering properly, so that we were ever running off the roads against the tree trunks and playing other pranks, we resumed our journey. Passengers by these coaches need to be trained trekkers, up to all the dodges of South African travel. Thus my companions, in order to enable our brakeless ungovernable cart to tumble down the remainder of the precipitous descent of Mica Hill with comparative safety, cut down another fair-sized tree with spreading branches and lashed it to the tail of the cart. That, dragging behind over the rocks, formed an efficient temporary brake.

But I understand that this section of the road is no longer the terrible track I found it. The management of the Wankie Collieries represented that, as its material was often delivered in a very damaged condition, it would have to await the coming of the railway and cease to import anything but necessities by waggon unless the road to the railhead was greatly improved. The result has been that the task of making the road

more practicable for transport was entrusted to a contractor, who engaged a gang of boys and expeditiously cleared the boulders from the worst places on the way and otherwise patched it up, so that now it is unrecognisable, and for the thirty-five mile section between the railhead and Wankie the traveller proceeds with relative smoothness of motion.

During those four days and nights of travel through the woodland wilderness we came on human habitations at one spot only. But that spot—Wankie—is of the vastest importance to Rhodesia and to all South Africa. We approached it in the evening of our second day out. This was one of the dustiest journeys possible throughout; but here we came to the dustiest part of it all, a weird bushland, where the soil was pitch black. For nearly a league we travelled through a deep, soft, very fine black powder like soot, which rose in dense clouds under the oxen's feet, covering us, and quickly making our faces as black as those of our Kaffir driver and voorlooper. The choking dingy clouds were composed of minutely-powdered coal, which is here found on the surface of the ground. The old travellers and hunters reported the existence of this black plain, and it was no doubt that unmistakable indication, as well as the sandstone of the hills, that set the prospectors searching for valuable mineral which has been discovered in such abundance hard by.

Having crossed the plain of black dust, we rounded some low kopjes and opened out a valley enclosed by steep heights. The white men's buildings, for the most part of corrugated iron, were scattered over the hill sides, and from some tall chimneys in the valley bottom volumes of black smoke were pouring—a strange sight to come across thus suddenly in these wilds. This was

Wankie, and the mail cart, after mounting a hill, outspanned outside the house of Mr. Price, the general manager of the mines, which overlooks the whole settlement. The coach made a sufficiently long halt here to enable me to visit the mines and to see and marvel at this splendid example of British enterprise in the remote wilderness. Only eighteen months before this was but an uninhabited malarious jungle, and even now absolutely wild desolate Nature, amid which no men dwell, closely hems in the vale of the great coal mine. It is still an unhealthy spot; but here, as has been the experience throughout South Africa, good housing, drainage, and clearance of rank vegetation are already dispelling the malaria.

And round this dusky centre of industry the lions still haunt the primeval jungle and cause some trouble to the settlement. Thus recently a donkey belonging to Mr. Price was carried off by a lion just in front of his house. Another lion had the boldness to enter a tent in which some of the police were sleeping and dragged out one of the beds with a man lying on it. Fortunately, the quick alarm caused the brute to run off before he had injured the man. Near here the boys at Zeederberg's stages on the road are frequently in danger. At one of these stages, significantly known as the Lion Outspan, we were delayed for some time because a lion had scared away the relay of oxen on the previous night. A few months ago at this very outspan a lion killed a Dutch transport rider who was sleeping under his waggon. But I had no experiences with lions, for in the month of May human and ox flesh are practically out of season with the lion race. It was the dry weather, and at that time, more especially during such a severe drought as that of this year, a lion has no need to risk

himself by prowling round the settlements of man. He has but to lie in ambush in the long grass near the rare water-holes to secure without danger or trouble the buck and other wild creatures that are compelled to come there to drink. It is in the rainy season that the lions become dangerous and are driven by hunger to attack human beings. At that time the game find water all over the country, wander far and freely, and are caught with difficulty by the lion, especially by the aged ones. Natives travelling in the rainy season sleep at night on little platforms in the trees, of which we saw many on the road.

It is amazing to see how much work has already been done at the Wankie coal mines, that too in the absence of a railway, and during the progress of a great war that cut off communication with the coast. Here and at the copper mines in the North the management appears to be excellent, and expert men have been brought from home to do the work. It is, unfortunately, not thus with many of the gold-mining and other companies of Southern Rhodesia. In the opinion of all who have spoken to me on this subject, the development of the country has been much retarded by the incapacity of some of the men who have been selected by these companies to watch their interests on the spot. Wandering through the valley, I saw the well-built offices and the houses for the accommodation of the white workmen. The healthily-situated native compound, with its comfortable housing for the Kaffirs, its good water supply, hot baths, kitchens, and other excellent arrangements, would serve as a useful object-lesson to the ignorant sentimentalists of Exeter Hall. I saw the long main drift sloping at a gentle angle into the bowels of the earth, from which, with what was practically

mining development plant only, a hundred tons of coal a day were being extracted. I saw rising from the ground a hill formed of 20,000 tons of coal awaiting the arrival of the railway to be carried away. The heavy permanent machinery is already lying at Beira and at the railhead, to be sent as soon as the railway reaches Wankie, which it probably will do by the time this is published. Then the work will commence in earnest. A thousand tons of coal a day will at once be brought to the surface from this one small section of these practically inexhaustible beds.

The Wankie coal appears to be without question the best in South Africa. The engineers who have come from home speak of it with enthusiasm, and one ton of it will do as much work as three tons of the coal now used in the Cape Colony for steam purposes. According to the Chartered Company's recent report, analysis shows that with the exception of the best Welsh coal a better steam coal than this cannot be found anywhere. It is not too much to say that the discovery of these coal-beds signifies the salvation of Rhodesia and insures its future prosperity. Cheap coal was essential to the development of the country ; without it the gold-mining industry could not but decline, for the timber has already been exhausted in the neighbourhood of many of the mines, and the cost of carting wood fuel for more than a few miles is prohibitive. I understand that the market for the Wankie coal will immediately extend at least as far as Kimberley, as it can be delivered there at a price that will make it profitable for the De Beers Company to use it. A busy and interesting place is Wankie ; there was plenty doing in the workshops at the time of my visit, and subsidiary work of all sorts, such as building and bricklaying, was in progress.

Skilled British artisans were earning very good wages. There were then about sixty white men and 470 natives employed on the mine.

From Wankie we continued our journey along the vile road in our rickety cart, halting occasionally to effect repairs whenever a tyre fell off a wheel, or the harness parted, or some other portion of the vehicle began to tumble to pieces. But we tied it all together somehow with 'reims,' and to our astonishment safely crossed the boulder-bristling precipitous drifts and dongas. It was still all dark woodland save where we occasionally came to the broad open spaces of the low-lying vleis; and here, though the water had disappeared in the long drought, the ground was still moist, so that the fresh grass, in striking contrast with the parched vegetation around, waved in the breeze under the fierce sunlight like a myriad flickering tongues of vivid green flame. And throughout the journey there was never a cloud in the sky by day or night.

On our fourth and last night of the journey we outspanned for a while at a stage to change the oxen, and, as we lay down on the ground outside the cattle kraal to get a few minutes' sleep, we clearly distinguished, our ears being near to the earth, a low noise like the distant roaring of the sea, and we knew that we were listening to the sound of the mighty cataract, now about sixteen miles away. It was dawn when we inspanned and commenced the last stage of our journey. As we neared the Zambesi the roar ever increased in volume, and soon, on reaching the summit of a high ridge, we saw, far off, on the level horizon, a great white silver-edged cloud, the only one in the blue sky. There is the 'smoke,' said my companions, who had made this journey before. It was the famous spray cloud that everlastingly hangs

over the Victoria Falls. The 'Mosi oa Tunya,' 'the smoke that sounds,' is the native name for the cataract. This mass of mist is visible for an immense distance, and would enable a traveller when several days' journey from the Falls to direct his way to them. The average height of the 'smoke' is 1,100 feet above the level of the plain; but it is often far higher, then having the appearance of a great white pillar soaring out of sight into the heavens.

When we were six miles off the Falls we looked down from a height on an impressive spectacle. The 'smoke,' rising from the heart of the vast dark woodland that stretched before us, now assumed what is its usual form in windless weather. It rose in five great columns, of which the central one was the largest, called by the Portuguese travellers the 'cinco dedos,' or 'the five fingers.' It looked exactly as if vast volumes of white steam were being thrown up from a league-broad volcanic crater that yawned in the dark plain, and the sound as of fiercely boiling gulfs echoing in subterranean chasms heightened the impression. Had some traveller of early days who had never heard of the Falls come on that view as we saw it, he might well have imagined that he had found one of the gates of Hell. From this point the river was still invisible, but as we progressed we occasionally saw gleaming silver streaks cleaving the sombre-hued forest—glimpses of the reaches of the Zambesi.

We travelled along hot sandy wooded ridges, and at last descended to the bank of the great Zambesi. At this point, six miles above the Falls, the river narrows to about 700 yards, and the current, I should say, is not over three knots; so this has been selected as the most convenient place for the ferry. We found no buildings

on the bank, the little settlement of Livingstone being on the opposite shore, in North-Western Rhodesia, between which and Southern Rhodesia the Zambesi forms the boundary. In North-Western Rhodesia, which is of course under a separate Administration, there are at present no Custom dues, and rebate of duties is given on imports from the South, so that supplies are no dearer, and in some instances are a little cheaper, at this remote spot, despite the heavy cost of transport, than they are in Bulawayo. In this province no hut-tax has yet been levied on the natives; but I believe that the tax will be imposed next year, and it is only fair that a people who are already benefiting greatly from the development of the country should contribute something towards the administration that enriches them and protects them against oppression. We found several waggons from the South unloading on the bank, their loads consisting for the most part of supplies for the white population, material for the Northern Copper Mines and articles for the native trade, such as cloth, wire, and beads.

As soon as we reached the bank a little steam launch put out to us from the further shore, took in tow the canoes containing the mail bags, ourselves, and our baggage, and landed us in front of the little collection of huts that composes the township of Livingstone, a place of future importance though now so insignificant to look on, for this is the natural port of entry for the vast yet-to-be developed North, and by this route the bulk of the trade must ever pass. We were now in Barotseland, the King of which, Lewanika, was so gratified with the reception he received when visiting Great Britain at the Coronation that he is now, I am informed, preparing a wonderful and regal gift indeed

for King Edward VII., a zoological collection consisting of a living specimen of every wild creature in Barotse-land, from lion and buffalo down to snakes and crocodiles. The ship that carries them across the seas will be a veritable Noah's Ark.

Livingstone at present consists of two stores—that of the Bechuanaland Trading Company and that of Mr. Clark, the agent for the Northern Copper Company—a small station of the Paris Evangelist Protestant Mission, and a little nursing hospital under the charge of a lady who was the pioneer of nursing in Rhodesia. There is no doctor in the place, and in the case of serious illness it would take a week to summon one. It is an unhealthy little settlement, being within reach of the cold river mists, and apparently no white man living here can escape the fever. This embryo township at the Drift, as this crossing-place of the river is called, is one of the three camps occupied by the white men settled at the Falls. Three miles lower down the river, and thus half way between the Drift and the Falls, is the camp of the Comptroller of North-Western Rhodesia, and here, too, is a beautiful little vegetable garden tended by a native of Madras. The garden is maintained by the subscription of all the officials and traders at the Falls, and supplies them with an abundance of fruit and vegetables. The third camp is that of the District Commissioner, which is three miles from the river, and at about an equal distance from the other two camps, forming a triangle with them. This camp is healthily situated on a height commanding a fine view over the dark woodland, the eternal 'smoke,' and the reaches of the Zambesi above the Falls. Near the District Commissioner's residence are the huts of the native police and the Post Office.

Such are the three camps that constitute the present settlement, set in the midst of this uninhabited wilderness, for there are no native kraals in this part of the country. The community is even a smaller one than one would imagine after gazing at the scattered huts, for the white people in the three camps put together number something under twenty. Where the new township of Livingstone will be has not yet been decided by the Chartered Company; but probably it will be on the southern or right bank of the river, in Southern Rhodesia, on a sandy ridge near the Falls.

CHAPTER XXVI

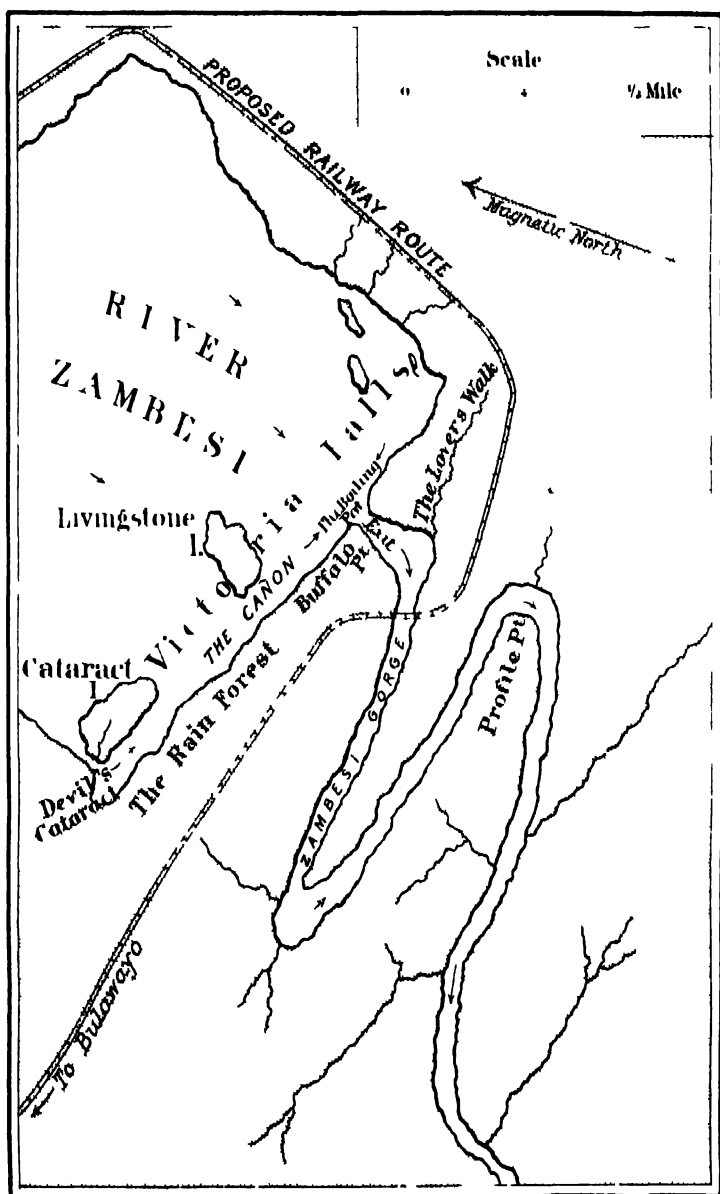
DESCRIPTION OF THE VICTORIA FALLS—THE ZAMBESI GORGE—THE VOLCANIC RIFT—DIMENSIONS OF THE FALLS—VIEW OF THE FALLS FROM THE LEFT BANK OF THE RIVER—THE GREAT CAÑON—THE EXIT—THE PROPOSED RAILWAY BRIDGE—VIEW OF THE FALLS FROM THE RIGHT BANK—RIVER SCENERY—THE DEVIL'S CATARACT—LIVING PRAYERS—LIVINGSTONE ISLAND—THE RAIN FOREST—AMONG THE RAINBOWS—IN THE WHIRLING SPRAY—ON DANGER POINT—THE BOILING POT.

I SPENT nine days at the Victoria Falls and viewed them from several points under various conditions. Each day the grandeur of them impressed me the more; the fascination of them grew stronger, and I discovered new awful wonders in them. The sublimity of the scenery can be but dimly comprehended at one's first visit. A spectator feels as if he had entered a universe where the phenomena are so far vaster and more majestic than those of his previous earthly experience that his limited mundane senses fail to grasp them at first, and can only gradually, by extending their perception, adapt themselves to that larger nature.

I had as my companion in these wanderings Mr. F. W. Sykes, the District Commissioner, who has become—as who would not who had lived like him for two years within sight of the cataract?—an enthusiast with regard to it, knowing it and loving it, familiar with its ever-changing phases and moods, having explored its mysteries as no man else has done. Mr. Sykes is also the only man who has explored the awful gorge through which the Zambesi thunders for forty:

five miles below the Falls. This gorge, a profound volcanic fissure in the level land, with precipitous mountains hemming in the raging flood, has many tributary gorges running into it, also volcanic clefts as precipitously walled as itself. Thus the explorer, while attempting to descend the main gorge, found himself frequently faced by inaccessible cliffs, and had to make long *détours* in order to turn these impassable side ravines. The natives only know four entrances—'doors' they call them—by which the Zambesi gorge can be entered for all its forty-five miles in length. This labyrinth of fearful ravines, where the black cliffs rise from a chaos of fallen rocks and boiling water, covers hundreds of square miles, a region such as Dante might have pictured, uninhabited by men or animals, bare of vegetation, and desolate as the surface of the moon. Soon, I hope, Mr. Sykes will give his story to the world.

Of the practical value of the Falls, of the great scheme by which it is proposed to utilise their incalculable power for the generation of electricity, which will be distributed among the townships and mines of Rhodesia, and make a manufacturing centre of Livingstone, I will say nothing for the present, but confine myself to a description of the cataract itself. The nature of the extraordinary volcanic fissure that created the Falls cannot easily be realised without reference to a map. The accompanying sketch map will serve the purpose. It will be seen that at the point under consideration the mighty Zambesi flows, roughly, from north to south. At about half a mile above the Falls the river is a mile and a half in breadth. Then it contracts, and the breadth at the Falls themselves is a little over a mile, or, to be exact, 1,936 yards. And here, to one looking over the edge of the Falls, the great river



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PLAN OF THE VICTORIA FALLS

seems suddenly to come to an end, no continuation of its channel being visible. The Zambesi for its whole mile of breadth thunders down precipitously into a comparatively narrow, profound trench, or cañon, which extends at right angles to the river's course from shore to shore. Beyond the Falls one is faced by the perpendicular wall of the cañon. Below, the madly whirling spray obscures the view of the bottom of the cañon, and it seems as if the whole mighty flood were falling into the centre of the earth through this awful chasm. But the river has its exit, as the map shows—a precipitous cleft, only 100 yards in breadth, near the eastern end of the cañon, through which the whole of the contracted Zambesi rushes with incredible speed, fury, and confusion, forming at this point what is called the Boiling Pot, surely one of this earth's most terrific scenes.

It is impossible to say where the old river-bed crossed this level country. Æons ago volcanic action tore open these Titanic cracks in the earth's crust, through which the Zambesi, in places narrowed to fifty yards, of unknown depth, and 400 feet below the level of the flat it traverses, rages onward for forty-five miles between the towering cliffs. This wonderful gorge takes a series of very sharp bends—the first few of which appear on the map—turning round on itself continually and flowing in contrary directions. The cliffs of the gorge are of black basalt, and are over 400 feet in height.

The following figures will convey some idea of the magnitude of the Falls, without doubt the greatest in the world. The cataract, as I have said, is over a mile in length. Its height is 347 feet. It is thus twice as long as Niagara and more than twice as high. The

volume of the falling water is also estimated to be far greater than that of Niagara. For 1,200 feet, and often to a far greater height, the vast spray columns eternally rise from the cañon; by daylight hung with rainbows as with jewels; and by night gleaming like pale ghosts under the moon, or darkling in shadow like huge wreaths of smoke. How it is that this, the greatest spray cloud in the world, is thus formed above the Falls is made clear to one who gazes into the depths of the cañon. The cataract, after dropping into that narrow cleft, has its furious rush suddenly checked by the sheer cliff that fronts it. The raging water is driven back on itself, and breaks into spray, which, mingling with volumes of displaced air, can only find an outlet upwards for its yet unspent though deflected force. Thus a current of this mingled wind and water, whirling, swaying, ever changing, rushes into the sky along the whole length of the cañon, in whose depths on the calmest days wild gusts rage and howl, and, sweeping upwards, shake the rank vegetation on the cliff top far above.

The country, which is nearly flat, is of the same level below as above the Falls. Above the Falls the broad river brims up to the surface of the plain, the banks being low. Below the Falls it winds down the narrow defiles that look as if they had been sharply cut out of the plain with a chisel. This most beautiful gem of the earth's scenery has for its setting a dreary and uninteresting country, a parched dark woodland, uninhabited since the raiding Matabele slew the people of this borderland, abandoned to wild beasts. One is reminded of the sweet fairy garden of the old stories, buried in the heart of a wan, enchanted forest. The elephants and buffalo that used to abound near the Falls have disappeared, but the hippopotami are still here,

and occasionally capsize the traveller as he floats down the river in his canoe.

One morning Mr. Sykes and myself set out at dawn from his house with the intention of spending the day in seeing all we could of the Falls from that side of the river—the left bank. First we rode down to the Comptroller's camp, three miles distant, and from there proceeded on foot down the river bank for another three miles to the edge of the Falls, forcing our way, now through ten feet high dew-soaked grass, and now through dense bush which filled up the spaces between the palms, palmyras, huge cream-of-tartar, and other trees. When we neared the Falls I saw that the broad river was strangely disturbed, tumbling in confused waves as if the water hesitated and was trying to hold back before making that stupendous plunge into the abyss. Going yet a little further, we came to a point at the eastern end of the cañon which commands one of the grandest views of the cataract, an opening in the bush just below the Falls, where I was able to stand at the extreme edge of the cliff, holding on to a small tree whose roots were in the very face of the precipice and whose branches overhung it.

From this spot, where the solid rock seemed to be shaking under my feet with the shock of the falling flood, I gazed for the first time at that awful scene. Of course, it is indescribable. One can but indicate the broad features of what one saw. On my right, close to, was the eastern end of the mile-long cataract. Over the lip of the cascade the river first rushed in a smooth convex curve, then dropped sheer, and a little way down the wall of water seemed to fall to pieces, huge masses of water detaching themselves, soon to burst into spray in mid air as if exploding furiously. Living-

stone rightly described it as being like the crumbling away of a mountain of chalk. In places it looked like an avalanche of snow and solid water and whirling vapour intermingled. Though I could look far down into the chasm, I could not see where the water fell to, for the depths below were obscured by the seething spray, that assumed wondrous forms, now curling in broad white whirlpools, and now rising high in fast-spinning columns like dry snow when it is carried up by the whirlwind. But occasionally a gulf would suddenly open out in the spray mass, as suddenly to close again, through which I caught a momentary glimpse of the tumult of water at the bottom of the cañon 400 feet beneath me.

On my left hand, rising from the whirling foam, was the great black perpendicular cliff that, bordering the chasm, faces the cataract along its whole length. This cliff was crowned with a luxuriant vegetation, richly coloured, in striking contrast with the blackness of the rock and the whiteness of the water and the spray, a forest of tropical trees, some as big as our oaks and beeches, with a lower growth of rank bush and creepers—a mass of green of various tints deliciously fresh. All this vegetation was bathed in the everlasting spray which was ever dripping from the lush foliage, the water drops as they hung for a moment on the myriad leaves flashing like diamonds in the sunshine or gleaming with the hues of the ruby, sapphire, and topaz when seen through the great rainbow that was spanning the chasm, having one horn on the cataract edge, the other on the cliff top. The black cliff itself was scored with innumerable tiny silvery cataracts, formed by the spray drops, which, falling from the leaves of the forest, flowed in little streams to the precipice brink



THE FALLS, WITH THE ZAMBESI IN FLOOD FROM THE EAST END OF THE CAÑON

to throw themselves over and return whence they came.

Such was the picture before me as I looked up the cañon under the bridging rainbow. I could not see far down that lane of raging waters. I could only distinguish distinctly the portion of the cataract that was near to me—a hundred yards or so out of that mile-long line of falling water; and so, too, on the other side my eyes could only follow the black cliff for a short distance. Both cataract and rock and cliff gradually faded out of sight in the glorious spray mist that rose from the cañon and, with the sun shining through it, gleamed like a luminous pearl that filled all the background of the scene. When the river is low there is less spray, and one's view is not so circumscribed. The river was in flood during my visit. From such great distances do the waters of the Zambesi gather that the river is in flood at the Falls in the heart of the dry season and at its lowest during the rainy season. But in flood time there is an exceeding and mysterious grandeur in the spectacle. I looked downwards and saw the cataract and the cañon cliffs falling into an unsubstantial sea of whirling mist. I looked in front of me and saw the rock on one side of me and the falling water on the other melt into the vast pearly cloud. The solid foundations of the earth had vanished, and I seemed to be standing at the world's very end and gazing out into the vagueness of the infinite space beyond it. And all the loveliness of terrestrial Nature seemed to be concentrated at this last corner of earth—the luxuriance of vegetation, the wonder of water, the softest and most beautiful atmospheric effects, the glory of rainbows.

Charles Dickens, in his description of Niagara, pointed

out that the effect on him of that tremendous spectacle was peace of mind and tranquillity, nothing of gloom or of terror. So, too, one feels as one gazes at the Victoria Falls of the Zambesi. It is too sublime a spectacle to have anything of horror in it. The sense of danger is strangely absent as one looks from the edge of the abyss at the majestic scene. It is as if one were out of this universe and in some higher one where the forces of Nature are on a gigantic scale, irresistible yet without menace; where there is no death or pain for living things, so that they are able to gaze with a rapture of admiration unmingled with fear at the stupendous and beautiful manifestations of power that cannot hurt them. At the Victoria Falls the traveller feels that he might well be looking on some landscape of Paradise.

As I stood at the edge of the abyss I began to realise that in the unending din there were two quite distinct noises—first, the loud roar of the rushing cataract, and, secondly, coming up from below, a deeper hollow sound as of thunder rolling in the uttermost depths of the chasm under the concealing veil of spray. This last sound was doubtless the multitudinous echoing among the cliffs of the mighty thud of the flood as it dropped on the rocks and whirlpools at the bottom of the cañon. Both my companion and myself noticed that it was difficult to distinguish these two sounds simultaneously. If one directed one's attention to the roar of the cataract one could hear nothing else. Again, if one listened to the mysterious sound in the depths, that, too, soon shut out all other noise, and the longer one listened to it the more it swelled in volume. It became as one continuous thunder-peal shaking the foundations of the cliffs, and after a while its roar was ever louder and louder in one's ears till to one's deceived senses it

appeared as if once again the volcanic forces were beginning to rend the land asunder. It was a curious and half-involuntary focussing of the sense of hearing such as neither my companion nor I had observed before. It was as if each of the sounds in succession were mesmerising the mind through the ear.

It was difficult to leave the spot. The longer one looked the more ever-changing wonders of spray and water and light one discovered. It was as a magic book which must be opened many times if one would comprehend its beauty and its meaning.

We had breakfast at this place before travelling further, and, just as we were leaving, the cold, shifting wind that came up from the depths of the chasm below began to blow in our direction, bringing with it a soft rain of spray. Now the whirling mist filled up the entire gulf in front of us, so that we saw nothing of the cataract or of the black cliff. From the edge of the precipice where we stood we looked out on a universe of curling vapour and loud echoing noise. It was more like the world's end than ever.

From here we followed the edge of the cliff until we faced the cataract, and saw the river, looking indistinct and ghostly through the haze, make its terrific plunge into the foam. Then we came to the beautiful ravine which someone has named, not well, the Lovers' Walk. Its steep rocky slopes are covered with a rich and beautifully green vegetation, great trees and palms and ferns of various species growing with a rare luxuriance, nourished by the eternal spray mist. As the map shows, this ravine opens out into the Zambesi gorge not far below the exit. Looking down it, I saw that it ended in a huge whirling spray cloud as if it were a gateway into Chaos. In other ravines near the Falls,

on the summit of the cliffs fronting them, and on both shores within a certain distance of them, one finds a lush fresh tropical vegetation. The 'smoke' forms the centre of a most luxuriant oasis, which is surrounded by as parched a wilderness as any in South Africa. Wherever the rain spray falls on the foliage and flowers it is a garden of Paradise.

From the Lovers' Walk we went westward along the cliff of the Zambesi gorge till we came to a point immediately facing the exit. Nearly 500 feet perpendicularly beneath us the river roared down its narrow unplumbed channel through the sharply winding volcanic cleft. Majestic columns of spray travelled down with the torrent as if sailing on its surface. Immediately in front of us opened out the narrow exit through which the converging waters rush out of the cañon. On both sides of this strange gateway the precipitous cliffs, over 400 feet in height, rise sheer from the foam. The cliff on the west side of the exit, called Buffalo or Danger Point, is a magnificent promontory, which we saw dimly looming through the spray that veiled it from its summit to its foot. And there before us was the awful Boiling Pot. No words can convey any idea of the aspect of the meeting waters of the river as they rush with terrific force out of the cañon through the exit into the Zambesi gorge—boiling, heaving, whirling, sinking into dark gulfs, leaping in pyramids, and throwing up to an immense height in spiral white columns, in shaking javelins, in spinning globes, the spray that forms the central dome of the mysterious 'smoke.' And framed by the two precipitous capes that border the exit we saw the spray-obscured, dim silvery curtain of the Falls themselves forming the background, the lip of the cataract and the summits of the two



THE FALLS AND THE SPRAY VEIL FROM THE LEFT BANK OF THE ZAMBESI



THE GORGE AND LOVERS WALK

cliffs being in one line—a scene most wonderful to gaze at.

Still further we followed the cliffs of the gorge till we came to the point, indicated on the map, where it has been decided that the Cape to Cairo Railway is to cross the Zambesi. Here, nearly 1,700 miles from Capetown, the gorge will be spanned by a bridge 635 feet in length. The Falls themselves will not be visible from the railway, but, in accordance with the wish expressed by Mr. Rhodes, the trains will pass through the perpetual spray rain while crossing this bridge. As I have already explained, the railway will probably reach the Victoria Falls within the next twelve months. From here it will be extended as soon as possible to Lake Tanganyika, tapping on the way the copper-mining districts on the Kafue and on the Congo Free State border.

From the site of the future bridge-end we walked southward through the dripping woodland till we came to the second great bend of the Zambesi gorge, and, standing at the cliff edge on the concave side of the bend, we looked across the river, which flowed 500 feet beneath us, at the massive, wedge-shape, forest-capped cape known as Profile Point, which is shown on the map. At this corner the river, dark green as seen from above, must be of immense depth. The water revolves slowly, sullenly, and quite smoothly in a great circle, filling the concave side of the bend, as if it were stunned after the awful shock of the fall over the cataract and the turmoil of the Boiling Pot, and so were lying still for a while before once again rushing onward in furious rapids, the roaring of which, not far below, reached our ears as we gazed at this strangely quiet pool. And so on we wandered, time unnoticed, gazing at wonder

after wonder on the left bank, and it was not until we had thus passed ten hours that we returned to the Comptroller's camp, and rode back to Mr. Sykes's house.

Another entire day, from dawn to dark, was spent in exploring the Falls and Rapids from the right bank of the river, and this was undoubtedly the most wonderful day of the two, though I had thought that nothing could be found on earth to eclipse the glorious marvels of the first day's wandering. We rode to the Comptroller's camp, embarked in a canoe, and were paddled by natives down the broad, rapid Zambesi to a point on the further bank about three miles above the cataract.

The river itself presents some beautiful scenery. For a part of the way we coasted by large islands which were covered with heavy timber, palms, and a lovely undergrowth. As the Zambesi was in flood, these paradises of tropical vegetation were washed by the brimming river. The trunks of the trees rose out of the water, their branches dipping into it. Huge flowering grasses, reeds, and bulrushes filled the interspaces. The banks were lined with a yellow-flowering shrub like our laburnum, and round its branches and those of the other trees wound lush-leaved convolvuli of most prolific growth, covered with great purple blossoms, which also floated on the water, mingling with the snowy lilies. It looked like some sweet realm of sprites and water nymphs, but the clumsy unhandsome hippopotami are the sole denizens of these fairy islands. The masses of foliage and blossom were reflected on the smooth stream, so that one could not distinguish where the real growth ended and the water images began, producing a magically beautiful effect. And as we were paddled onward by the monotonously chanting boatmen the



LOOKING UP THE EXIT AT THE SPRAY
VEILED FALLS AND DANGER POINT



THE FALLS FROM THE WEST END OF
THE CANON

horizon in front of us was ever the mile-long line of the Falls, a bar of gleaming water broken only by the small wooded islets on the brink, with the mysterious 'smoke' spreading out behind it like a gigantic white curtain.

From the point where we landed we walked for three miles through the dense jungle that borders the river, seeing many fresh hippopotami tracks, but catching sight of none of the animals themselves. This brought us to the edge of the Devil's Cataract, which, as the map shows, is an isolated portion of the Falls, where a huge volume of water makes a perpendicular plunge into the cañon over the precipice between the mainland and Cataract Island. From the shore we could look over the very lip of the cataract, and saw, hundreds of feet below, the seething water and spray dashing with violence against the mighty opposite cliff.

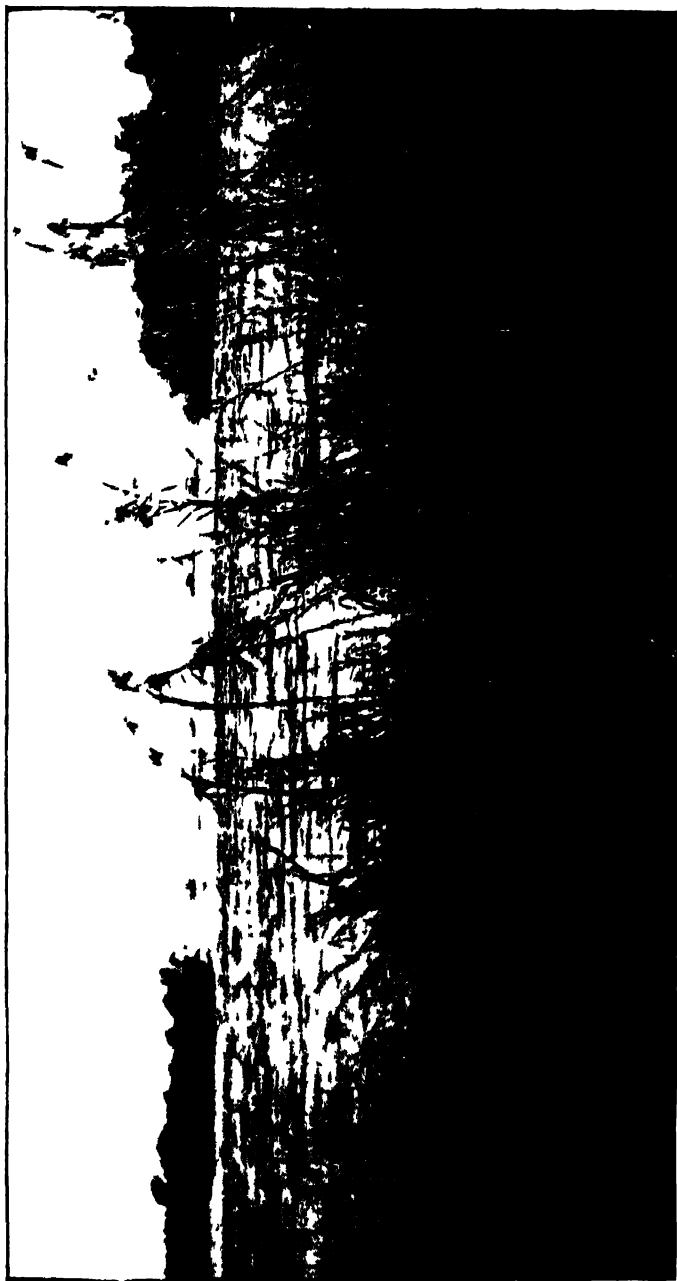
We followed the cañon cliff round its westernmost curve, and I noticed that the tufts of grass growing at the very brink of the abyss had been tied at the top into knots by the natives, so that they had the appearance of so many ninepins. Each of these knotted tufts was a petition to the spirits of the Falls, for the Barotse feel the awful influence of the cataract, and in recognition of and in supplication to the mystic power of the water they fashion these living prayers.

At last we stood on the cliff at the very end of the cañon, and, as we looked up the length of that terrific chasm, we had on our right the long black wall of the basalt cliff, along whose summit stretches the Rain Forest, and on our left the silvery veil of the Falls broken by Cataract Island and the more distant misty Livingstone Island. Both these islands are beautifully timbered, and they fall perpendicularly into the foam

at the cañon bottom, their precipices forming a part of the sheer rock wall over which the cataract thunders.

Mr. Sykes has landed on both these islands. Cataract Island is always dangerous of access ; but Livingstone Island can be reached without difficulty or danger during the five months that the river is low—that is, from the beginning of September to the end of January. It will be remembered that Dr. Livingstone, the first white man to see the Victoria Falls, carved the initials of his name on a tree growing on the island that now bears his name. The old native who was with Livingstone at the time pointed out to Mr. Sykes the exact place on the tree where he saw the letters cut, and there, indeed, the ‘D. L.’ were still to be vaguely discerned on the bark. Livingstone in his book states that this was the one occasion in his life that he was guilty of the common vanity of thus carving his initials. He was fully conscious of the glory of the Falls, which were, he said, the most wonderful thing he had seen in Africa. Many people think that this lonely surf-beaten islet would be the one spot of all others in South Africa for which he did so much whereon to erect a monument to the great explorer.

The view from where we stood at the precipice edge at the western end of the cañon was to my mind the most wonderfully beautiful of all the exquisitely beautiful scenes I beheld at the Falls. It was more especially so in the early afternoon, when we returned to this spot after completing our other explorations ; for then the sun, being behind us and high in the heavens, gloriously illumined the vast landscape, giving it a colour and atmosphere that seemed not to be of earth. Turner might have painted it and been able to convey some idea of it. The conditions were peculiarly favourable,



THE ZAMBESI AND THE TOP OF THE FALLS

and I believe that on that day I was gazing at the most perfectly beautiful spectacle of all this beautiful world. It was the lovely tenderness of the rich colouring, bathed in that translucent atmosphere of thin pearly haze, rather than the awful majesty of the scene, that impressed one. At our feet, far below, the raging flood thundered away down the cañon to the exit in the misty distance. On our left the line of the cataract, plunging into the swirling spray beneath, was clearly visible for some way out with its white avalanches and coruscating spray, and then gradually became less distinct in the thin haze until at last, far off, beyond Livingstone Island, it disappeared from our vision in the luminous pearl-like mist that formed the background to all the landscape. On our right, facing the cataract, loomed the 500-feet high wall of the cañon topped by the lush green Rain Forest, with its ever-dripping branches.

And as we looked new wonders became gradually revealed to our wondering gaze. I began to perceive in nooks of the black precipices, half way down, strange plants growing as in happy confidence, their fragile rainbow-hued blossoms ever shaking in the wind and driving spray, but safe and unharmed amid this eternal storm. And down the black cliff wall on my right I saw hundreds of tiny white streamlets pouring, formed by the returning spray from the Rain Forest. And as I watched them I discovered a strange thing. These falling streams never reached the bottom of the chasm; they dropped in little cascades to about a third of the way down, and then, as if defying all the laws of gravity, they literally turned round and came back again, mounting vertically. It was curious to see these cascades, after breaking into spray, appear to hesitate and

falter, and then begin to rise, first slowly, but soon rapidly, shooting upwards in whirling foam columns and feathery fountains, being carried up by the fitful blasts of cold air that the dropping cataract forced out of the narrow chasm into which it thundered.

It was indeed a wonderful scene, and, as the spray mist is not so dense at this end of the Falls as it is further cast, where the Boiling Pot sends its huge cloud into the heavens, one could distinguish the details of the scene for a much greater distance up the cañon than is possible from the left bank. And as the sun's rays fell on that kaleidoscopic, ever-moving, changing scene, made up of rock, water, mist, and shivering foliage, the colouring of it all was gorgeous yet of sweetly tender tints under that luminous pearly atmosphere formed by the spray mist. Below, where one caught glimpses of the rushing water, it was in turn brown and golden, blue, and rich dark green. The cliff, sparkling with dripping water, was of shining black and in places of glowing bronze. The foliage in the Rain Forest and on Cataract Island was of the green of an eternal spring, and a myriad jewels of twinkling light were made by the water drops on the trembling leaves. A glorious rainbow spanned the chasm, and other rainbows flitted in the haze. As for the tender pale beauty of the cataract and of the luminous pearly mist, no words could convey it to the imagination.

And now we set out to explore the mysterious Rain Forest that, covering the cliff top, fronts the cataract along all its length. We worked our way through the dense bush, round the corner of the cañon, till we faced the Devil's Cataract, and saw that the huge volume of water fell so sheer that half way down it broke into detached masses which burst as they darted through

the spray cloud into the invisible depths of that awful chasm. Then we plunged into the Rain Forest itself, and here, though there were some open savannahs of grass and fern, the growth of trees and bush was generally so dense that we could only progress by following the many intersecting hippopotamus tracks, tunnels which these animals had forced through the vegetation, down which we had to crawl, wading through deep mud and rank sodden grass, and crossing many streams of running water made by the falling spray—streams that dropped over the cliff to form the little cataracts I have described as falling so far down only to be whirled up again by the wind gusts. And as we went through the jungle the rain ever poured down on us from the tree branches, with the volume but not the force of a heavy tropical shower, for the drops fell gently. And all the trees were moving and shaking off the rain, for, though it was a windless day on the surrounding plains, the gusts ever swept up from the cañon, now blowing in one direction now in another, perpendicularly, horizontally, and obliquely in turn, carrying with them the rapidly whirling spray columns.

It was a forest of eternal driving wind and rain; and yet, despite this, it was no dark, cheerless, stormy scene that surrounded us. We walked through an atmosphere that was bright and luminous and even dazzling to our eyes. For, from the cloudless blue above us, which we could not see, the fierce rays of the sun pierced the spray cloud, filling the air with a diffused watery ever-shifting light. It was as if the sunshine were pouring on us through a veil of thin white silk. In this light the raindrops on all the leaves sparkled like jewels. As we walked on there was always on the right hand of each of us a bright rainbow following him

wheresoever he went like an attendant ghost. When we were in the more open spaces these rainbows retreated to a long distance off and waxed larger, appearing to span leagues of country ; but when the forest closed in on us they came nearer and were smaller, in the denser jungle narrowing to arcs of colour not a yard across and so close that it seemed as if one had but to stretch out one's hand to touch them. At times I saw my own attendant rainbow between myself and my companion.

And now that we were in the midst of the forest we realised all the unsurpassed luxuriance of this tropical vegetation bathed in sunshine and everlasting rain ; the vivid greenness of the great trees, whose branches were linked with the multitudinous tendrils of the lianes and convolvuli ; the lushness of the grass and ferns ; the wondrous beauty of the various delicate flowers with rainbow-tinted petals, frail-looking but unharmed by the endless storm, marvellous blossoms that one was loth to pick. We plucked a few, hoping to keep them as specimens, but found that they almost immediately faded and withered in one's hand like the flowers of the enchanted garden of the fairy tale. And this night, indeed, have been a garden of fairyland, so unreal and dreamlike it looked in that luminous atmosphere.

Occasionally we worked our way to the very edge of the cliff, and saw facing us the long line of the Falls dimly discernible through the haze. Nothing but the rushing water and the spray were visible, and the ghostly white cataract seemed to be thundering out of empty space into empty space. As we stood on the verge of the cliff the cold wind from the depths, a wind that was made half of air and half of water, swept round us in violent gusts. We were now in the centre

of the rising 'smoke' and could see all its workings. The dense spray soared in whirling columns before us ; billows of spray sometimes dashed themselves furiously on us ; and slanting sheets of water drove past us into the forest behind. The wind seemed to come out of cold caverns of death and chilled us to the bone. And yet ever by our side, advancing when we advanced, stopping when we stopped, were the faithful little attendant rainbows, brightening and waning with the changing density of the water-wind that swirled around us.

And so on we went, drenched, for no waterproofs will keep one dry here, now under the dripping trees, now over the soaked savannahs, and now clambering over the slippery rocks on the cliff edge, until we had traversed the whole length of the Rain Forest and had come to the most terrible spot of all. We were standing at the extremity of that great wedge-shaped promontory of rock called Danger Point or Buffalo Point—it is shown under the name of Buffalo Point on the map—which forms the western side of the exit and rises sheer from the foam of the Boiling Pot, that dreadful meeting-place of waters in appalling tumult. At times we had to stoop and hold on to the streaming rocks to prevent ourselves from being blown over—I might almost say from being washed off—the precipice, for here the winds seemed to be made more of water than of air. Looking out from this projecting crag, which felt as if it were trembling with the gigantic shock of the cataract, we seemed, indeed, to have reached the very end of the living world. We gazed out on a universe of wind and water. We saw nothing on either side of us or before us but masses of whirling vapour, and in our ears was the howling of fitful gales and the hollow roar of raging waters rising from indistinguishable depths beneath us.

We might have been gazing at a primordial chaos from which some day, after the passing of æons, a world would be created. On this wild cape the air was no longer luminous as in the forest ; the sun's rays did not pierce the dense vapours ; the faithful little rainbows were unable to follow us here, and had left us. The whirling rain closed in on us dismal, grey, and cold. Once or twice only, as we stood fascinated on this cape of the everlasting storm, did some more than usually violent blast, coming up from the depths 500 feet beneath, tear open a perpendicular rift in the spray cloud, so that, looking down, we caught a momentary glimpse of the fearful Boiling Pot below.

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